

IAN DUNT BORIS JOHNSON CANNOT WIN THE BATTLE FOR THE UNION

THE NEW EUROPEAN

#205

★ www.theneweuropean.co.uk ★ Thursday, July 30 - Wednesday, August 5, 2020 ★ £3

AIR FARCE!

HOW QUARANTINE CHAOS EXPOSED CAPTAIN BORIS... AGAIN

UNITED KINGDOM

DEATH OF
A GREAT
AMERICAN
**BONNIE
GREER**

CHINA'S COVID
CRACKDOWN
ON DISSENT
**GILES WHITTELL
& YAQIU WANG**



ANDREW ADONIS DON'T JUST MOVE THE LORDS NORTH.. SEND THE COMMONS TOO

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Don't just move the Lords north.. Let's take the Commons too

Andrew Adonis



I have finally found something I agree with Boris Johnson and Dominic Cummings about: moving the House of Lords up north.

Indeed I proposed it way back in 2007 when a minister under Tony Blair. I was in a minority of one on this in the Lords itself, and there aren't many more supporters now.

My reason for supporting it then was a concern that the world of Westminster was too distant – psychologically as much as physically – from most of England, particularly the less advantaged Midlands and north of England.

This was palpably getting worse in view of devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which by then had taken effect.

Since 2007, we have had the banking crash, Brexit, austerity, the collapse of Labour's 'red wall', and Covid-19.

The fear of Westminster isolation and elitism has become a reality, and a chasm has opened up between London and the south east and the rest of England.

There has been another key development since 2007. The Houses of Parliament have started falling down – literally. Big Ben has been encased in scaffolding for the past three years, symbolically the three years since Brexit became a deep crisis.

The rest of the parliamentary estate also needs to be revamped in a multi-billion pound renovation due to start in the mid-2020s.

Instead of spending billions on renovating the mid-Victorian Houses of Parliament, it would be more cost effective, politically as well as financially, to move both Lords and Commons to a purpose-built venue further north, and turn the existing Palace of Westminster into a fitting second site for the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Once the vast nearby modern buildings, which accommodate the offices of MPs and peers, are sold off, there would probably be a net profit on the whole transaction.

This would also be an impetus to reform of the House of Lords, which is a few centuries beyond its sell-by date as a hereditary and nominated assembly.

The second chamber should be a senate representing the nations and regions of the United Kingdom, like the US senate or the German Bundesrat, making the case stronger still for locating it in the middle of Great Britain rather than deep in the south east.

Beyond the disruption of relocation, which is going to happen anyway with the renovation programme, there is to my mind no good reason against moving one or both Houses to the Midlands or the north. When HS2 opens from the late 2020s, the three key stations directly on the HS2 north-south route – Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds – will be far more accessible to most of the UK by rail and road than London, while the first two also have international airports.

What about ministers and civil servants? Some or all of them would need to move too, and this would be a good thing too.

At long last, the delusions of the Foreign Office and the Treasury will be divorced from imperial buildings. 10 Downing Street could become 1 Salford Quays, 2 Chamberlain Square, 3 The Royal Armouries or 4 York Minster.

Is there a problem with the UK's largest and richest city no longer being its political capital? The US, Australia and Canada don't seem to mind. The creation of modern democratic Germany took place from the small Rhineland town of Bonn, which only narrowly failed to become the united Germany's new capital in 1990.

Ironically, compared to London, a decisive factor in the choice of Berlin was its location in the heart of deprived East Germany.

That leaves just one – very big – question. Where precisely should be the new home of parliament?

York is the historic capital of the north, location of many meetings of parliament in the Middle Ages. But even with HS2, York is not as convenient for the rest of the UK as Manchester, Birmingham or Leeds, and is not itself a metropolis.

So I have a suggestion. Let's have a national competition about the new location, and then parliament can vote between the options. We could even have a referendum. On second thoughts, maybe ditch that last idea.

10-11 'THE GOOD TROUBLEMAKER'

The extraordinary life and legacy of civil rights titan John Lewis

BY BONNIE GREER



17 KISSING GOODBYE

Covid's chilling effect on the classic Gallic greeting

BY ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

31-37 EMPIRE STATE OF MIND

How imperial Britain depicted itself on screen

BY JAMES OLIVER



21-24 THE DISAPPEARED

The Chinese Communist Party's Covid clampdown on its critics

BY GILES WHITTELL & YAQIU WANG



38-39 THE TROUBLE WITH TENNIS

Why we are blessed with a golden generation but not a golden era

BY JOHN WILLIAM DEVINE

26-27 DE-LUX TRAVEL

How the Grand Duchy is pioneering free public transport for all

BY EMMA LUCK

40-41 JAZZ À JUAN

The chic French resort that became a capital of jazz

BY SOPHIA DEBOICK

SUBSCRIBE:
ADVERTISE:

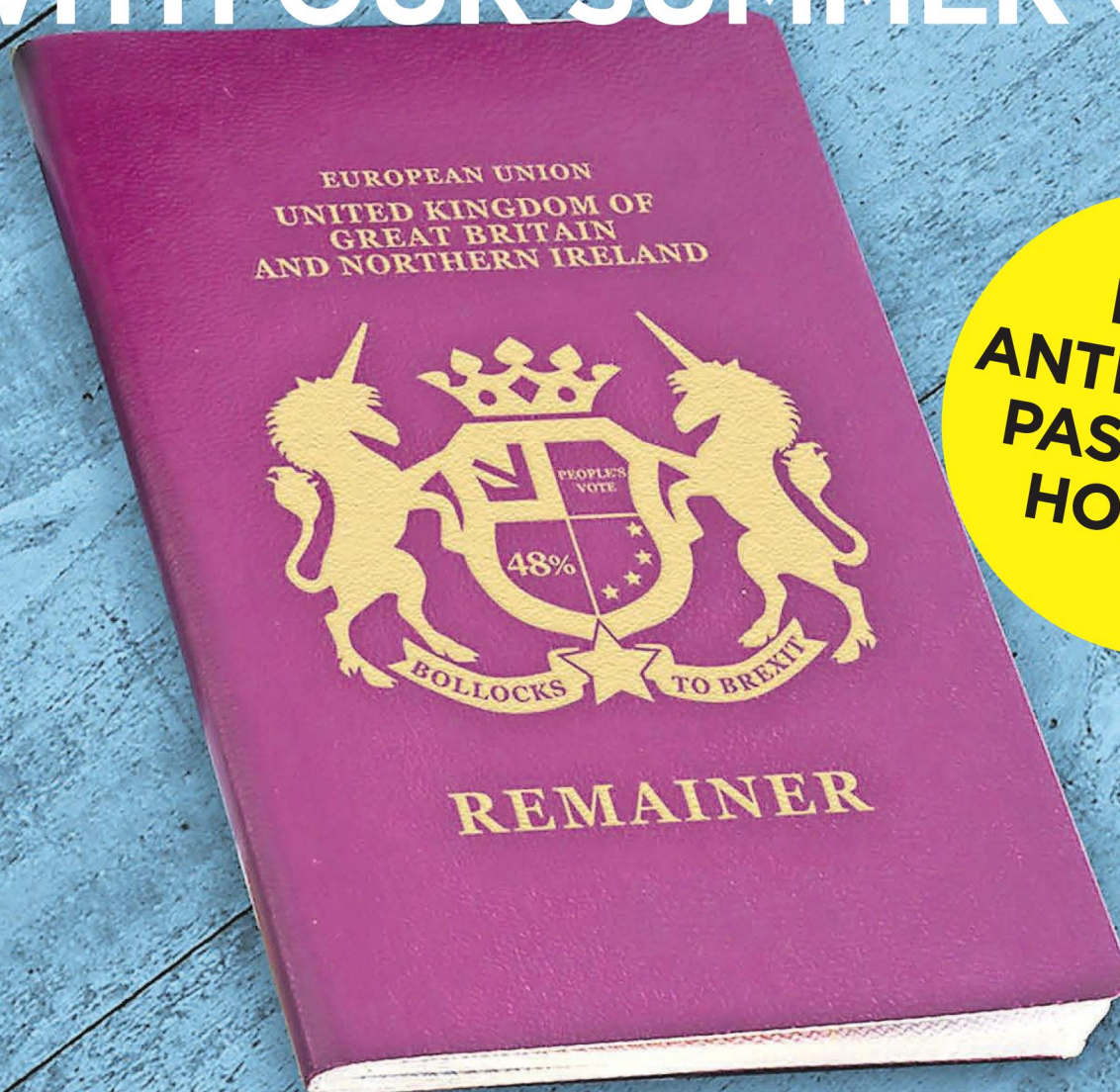
Join the movement.. for great subscription offers see Page 3

Support us by advertising your business: contact matt.kelly@archant.co.uk

THE NEW EUROPEAN
"A POP-UP PUBLICATION"

THE NEW **EUROPEAN**
SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

BE A HOLIDAY REMAINER WITH OUR SUMMER OFFER



**FREE
ANTI-BREXIT
PASSPORT
HOLDER**

13 ISSUES FOR £20

FREE UK Delivery when you subscribe.

Plus, receive your FREE Remainder passport holder.



WWW.SUBSAVE.CO.UK/TNESUM



01858 438864 quote CTNSUM20

Terms & Conditions: Subscribe and get 13 weeks of The New European for just £20 by Direct Debit, saving you 49%. After your first 13 weeks, your subscription rate will continue at £25.35 every 13 weeks. Alternatively, Credit/ Debit card option available at £30 for 13 weeks. Savings are based on cover price. Gift available whilst stocks last. Please allow up to 28 days for delivery of gift. Please call +44 01858 438864 for overseas rates. Lines are open 8am - 5pm, Mon - Fri, 8am - 4pm Saturday. Offer ends 31/08/2020.

AGENDA



JAMES BALL'S DECONSTRUCTED



When what should be a good and obvious policy becomes a fiasco, you know something fundamental has gone awry. This is what should be – but almost certainly isn't – eating away at Boris Johnson and his team this week.

During a global pandemic of a highly infectious disease, travel restrictions and quarantines are a sensible tool to be part of a country's response, and have been used effectively by multiple nations during the Covid-19 outbreak.

These restrictions work best when the country imposing them has its own outbreak under control, with coronavirus at very low levels in the population. The measures can then be used to curb or control travel from areas where the disease is much more prevalent.

If they are driven by the evidence and used in a time-limited way (rather than just to stoke anti-immigration sentiment, as some suspect Donald Trump's use of travel bans has been) then quarantine measures and travel guidance can be imposed quite reasonably, in a way that populations can come to accept as a necessary, if frustrating, way to contain Covid.

Given all this, it is extraordinary just how much the UK has managed to bungle its implementation of this perfectly sensible idea.

The string of failings that has led to this week's summer holiday fiasco – with new official advice against all non-essential travel to Spain and quarantine measures for those returning from the country – and the potential for future restrictions relating to other nations, is revealing. And it tells us more about our government than just how it is coping with the coronavirus crisis.

As with almost every major public health intervention from this government, from mask-wearing to junk food bans, quarantine has been the subject of at least one U-turn in recent months.

In the early days of the pandemic, when such a measure might have been useful in slowing the spread of the disease to Britain, it was used in only the most limited of ways – and largely dismissed by our public health experts as well as by our politicians.

Several months later, after the UK had suffered one of the worst outcomes in terms of Covid cases and deaths in the world, the government announced it would, after all, introduce a quarantine on those arriving from overseas – at a time when current UK cases were still higher than many of the places travellers would have to quarantine from.

This effectively left the UK suggesting people arriving from countries far safer than the UK should isolate

themselves, largely irrationally. However, as soon as the policy was announced, newspapers were already trailing that 'air bridges' would imminently be launched to most major tourist destinations from the UK – meaning that the policy would become largely irrelevant almost as soon as it was enacted.

The result, once again, was a confusing flurry of noise with very little clear signal. It was evident Johnson was determined to see headlines saying he had 'saved summer holidays', even if he was only 'saving' them from a policy his own government had just launched.

Sure enough, the media storm around the new measures, which meant holidays were possible, focused on this good news more than the caveats and the risks that went along with the changes.

Many families, doubtless inspired in part by the pressure of months of confinement at close quarters with one another, seized upon the opportunity to book trips abroad.

Spain, in recent days, has become the first example of how that can go wrong. Holidaymakers had been positively encouraged to book trips, for their own sake and to help the economy in the UK and their destination alike – travel and tourism face annihilation from long shutdowns.

Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, led the way, disclosing on the *Today* programme, after the guidance on non-essential overseas travel was relaxed, that he was taking a family holiday abroad.

Shapps had previously warned that anyone booking a holiday for August would be taking a chance, but he went out of his way to reassure *Today* listeners that things were different now: "Of course, since that time the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been able to change their travel advice. We have established air bridges or international travel corridors to a number of different countries allowing that to happen. These are personal choices but we have issued guidance now for airlines to ensure that people can travel in a Covid-safe manner as well. So there is much more structure in place now as we approach the summer."

The precise risks involved in those 'personal choices' were not fleshed out, but they would have become clear to Shapps this week, when he was forced to cut short his trip to Spain so he could get through his quarantine period.

Anyone who booked a holiday after March knew about the existence of the coronavirus pandemic – and anyone who booked more recently in theory knew about the possibility of 'air bridges' being suspended and quarantine imposed too.

That means that hardly a single travel



Flight of fantasy

Quarantine chaos another example of ministers believing their own publicity

SHAMBLES:
1 Passengers wearing a face mask after landing at Manchester Airport

2 Transport secretary Grant Shapps
Photos: Getty Images

insurance policy on the market will cover any disruption caused by either, leaving families on the hook for cancelled holidays they are no longer confident they should take, because they fear further quarantines could be imposed.

This has only been the start of the misery for families already overseas: employers are not obliged to pay workers who can't do their jobs because of quarantine, leaving some facing two weeks with no income – and some fearing that their employer could simply fire them.

While the latter outcome is not technically allowable, for many workers in insecure employment (or with less than two years in post), there would be almost no legal recourse to prevent it.

This leaves people fearing their jobs, and worrying about how to pay the bills if they get caught in quarantine for following government encouragement to take a holiday – and official advice to rely on Universal Credit to cover that

fortnight is hardly going to inspire confidence in anyone who knows that system, even slightly.

For a government supposedly desperate to reassure us about getting back to normal, these failings are dismal. As we hear more and more from travellers affected in the days and weeks to come, their stories will shatter the confidence of families who were previously willing to chance a holiday.

Given the huge delays in the government introducing policies on travel restrictions in the first place, there was ample time to think through ways to support those who might get caught up in quarantine, to cover the lack of travel insurance (perhaps via a government insurance scheme) and – crucially – to ensure all the risks and possibilities were well communicated and understood.

Yet again, the government has been the most significant obstacle to its own plans on coronavirus. Its shoddy messaging and incompetent handling are the main





hurdles to getting back to normal – not resistance or a lack of goodwill from any parties involved.

The irony of the whole thing is that this particular quarantine restriction may not even be especially good for public health: it covers Majorca and Tenerife, islands hundreds of miles from Spain's Covid-19 hotspots, for example, but not southern France, a mere 20 minute drive from some of Catalonia's outbreaks.

The reason given is the complexity involved in enforcing rules limiting lockdowns to specific regions of countries – but given the UK quarantine system is in practice largely voluntary and based on goodwill (only one person has been fined for breaching quarantine to date), there is very little enforcement to complicate.

The result of all this has been to bewilder and annoy Spain, who rightly feel unfairly treated by the blanket ban, to cause financial hardship to British

holidaymakers already there, and to stress and dishearten those planning a summer holiday.

This is not what anyone would call a triumph for British policymaking in Europe.

Managing quarantines and travel bans is much, much simpler than the preparations to come as the transition period runs out at the end of the year.

Those preparations will require far more goodwill, quick-thinking, clear communication and creative thinking. Three word slogans will not get the job done here.

That phase of Brexit will rely just as much on consumer and business confidence as coronavirus reopening has so far.

The government has given us few reasons to hope, and every reason to worry. How long will this administration continue destroying itself from the inside – and how much else will it bring down with it?

Mandrake

Tim Walker

mandrake@theneweuropean.co.uk

@thattimwalker



Johnson's 'spies' in the national press

Dr Julian Lewis's lethal question in the Commons last week to the security minister **James Brokenshire** – drawing attention to my scoop that **Dominic Cummings** had attempted to replace the secretariat of the independent Intelligence and Security Committee with political appointees – underlines how trust in the British mainstream media is now in short supply.

"This government has friends in the newsrooms of just about every one of the old national newspapers," the individual who gave me that story explained. "I'm coming to you as I want the facts out there quickly and with no repercussions for me."

My informant, who contacted me on July 15 to relate in real time the attempted power grab, is not the first to circumvent old Fleet Street. It was a newspaper on the other side of the world – the *Sydney Morning Herald* – that was tipped off that Cummings intended to tour our top secret security and defence installations, including MI5, MI6 and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down, near Salisbury.

I might add I've never met or communicated with Dr Lewis – the man who had the Tory whip removed when he successfully challenged **Chris Grayling** as chair of the intelligence committee – and the Brexit-backing MP plays things very much by the book.

Still, when he took Brokenshire to task in the Commons, he showed some spirit by wearing a tie that only parliamentary whips are allowed to wear. Lewis, pictured, served in the opposition whips' office during **Iain Duncan Smith's** spell as Tory leader.



risking a late filing penalty of £1,500 for each one. Those overdue include group parent firm Quintessentially (UK).

The delay is only likely to increase interest in the Quintessentially accounts with reports in recent months of a £340,000 per annum taxpayer-funded contract held by the firm to "pamper wealthy foreign visitors".

In response to newspaper allegations of a conflict of interest, Elliot's spokesman insists: "The contract with the government commenced in 2014, which pre-dates Mr Elliot's co-chair role by five years. Any suggestion he has used his influence as co-chair is absolutely false."

Remainer

Morale soared briefly last week on the road in north London where **Dominic Cummings** lives. An estate agent turned up with a "for sale" sign, but, after initially looking like he was going to put it up outside the home of Johnson's all-powerful adviser, he headed up a few doors and placed it there.

"I knew it was too good to be true, but it may yet spur him into thinking of relocating and that'd be great news for everyone here as we're sick to death of all the camera crews," a long-suffering neighbour tells me. "They're asking £2.5 million for the house that's up for sale and my Googling shows that if Cummings did decide to go he'd make an £850,000 profit on his place."

Sasha Swire, wife of the former Tory MP **Hugo Swire**, meanwhile has a rather good description of Cummings whom she first encountered during his days as a SpAd to **Michael Gove** when he was education secretary. "Cummings looked like one of those odd amoebas you find in jars in school science labs," she writes in her forthcoming book, *Diary of an MP's Wife*. "What also struck me was his over-inflated view of his self-importance."

Fan club

Mandrake has acquired an unexpected fan in **Jennifer Arcuri**, one of the innumerable women in **Boris Johnson's** life before **Carrie Symonds**. "Of course I follow you – I enjoy your tweets," the American technology entrepreneur tells me, charmingly. I ask Jennifer, pictured, for her verdict on Johnson's first year as prime minister. "I'm watching every day trying to make sense of what seems to be happening," she tells me, frankly. Aren't we all?

Waiting game

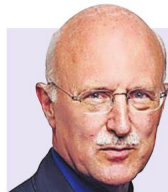
As co-chairman of the Conservative Party, **Ben Elliot** has a role in keeping its finances in good order. It doesn't engender confidence that the old Etonian nephew of the **Duchess of Cornwall** has failed to submit accounts for his luxury concierge companies in a timely manner to Companies House.

No fewer than 12 businesses where Elliot sits as a director are six months behind with their accounts to the business watchdog – meaning he's



AGENDA

Boris the one dreich pony



MICHAEL WHITE ON THE TALENT AND ENERGY NEEDED FOR THE BREXIT AND UNION BATTLES

Who was it who likes to mention his love of Whac-a-Mole? Ah, yes, the prime minister. But Boris Johnson is finding out what more serious students of the popular Japanese arcade game could have told him from the start. The more the player thumps those moles down the hole the faster they keep reappearing.

The Covid pandemic mole? Whack. Those Brexit trade talks? Whack again. US trade talks? Whack, but only gently because the White House is sensitive. Oh no, here comes the Scottish independence mole which McBoris thought he'd love-bombed out of sight ages ago. And what's that, the Irish border protocol mole and the Huawei retaliation mole, would you believe it?

Now the Covid mole has popped back up too, though, strictly speaking, it's a cat that's caught Covid-19, not a mole. After the huge response to last week's Whitehall quiz ("what does the new mask policy mean?") it's the turn of quarantine policy to baffle us all. With Mediterranean holiday destinations threatening to do to Europe what Chinese New Year travel did for Wuhan in super-spreading January, ministers hastily produced a 'Spanish quarantine' mole. Not confusing enough? Let's speculate about cutting 14 days to 10 and add the Covid-lite Balearic Islands to the mix. Holidaymakers heading both ways at airports sounded distinctly cross. Selectively briefing mates on friendly newspapers doesn't help. Do we believe Boris's "second wave" talk – or is it a first wave spike after lockdown easing?

Thank goodness the Brexit mole looks like staying out of the media's sight for a few weeks, exhausted No.10 officials must tell each other: With luck their boss will take a serious holiday too, he hasn't had one for weeks and starts WhatsApp-ing colleagues at 6am (so cheerleaders claim). He needs to preserve his strength if he's to survive a second year in office. Another one as 'successful' as his first year – so we kept reading last week – and even the *Daily Borisgraph* might defect.

If so, Tory MPs, always unsentimental when discarding leaders, could feed him to those Orkney crabs which Johnson gingerly handled for the TV cameras on his flying visit to remote corners of Scotland. Competing as it did with rival escapist attractions (how did Johnny Depp and Amber Heard's decadent feud jump the legal traffic jam?), Johnson's trip wasn't big news in Fleet Street and seems to have attracted some mockery north of the border.

According to local reporter, Fiona Grahame's admirably balanced account in the *Orkney News* (it began: "It was a dreich morning for Boris Johnson's visit....") the secrecy surrounding his appearance in Stromness (pop 2,200) on a drearily overcast – ie dreich – day did not prevent protesters lining the route to

welcome their PM. "Save the NHS" is a familiar poster everywhere and Extinction Rebellion was also present, pro-EU supporters too, as well as one despairing soul writing "Not Enough Space to List Your Wrong Doings". BLM also made itself felt thanks to a group called "Orkney Oot Wae Racism".

Orkney has always been very independent-minded and only joined Scotland from Norway in 1472, almost yesterday in its 8,000 year history. In line with most Scots, Orcadians voted Remain in 2016 (by 63% to 37%) and against independence (by a high 67% to 33%) in 2014. Occasionally they threaten to break away from Scotland again. Oslo is 500 miles away, Edinburgh only 200, but post-Viking Norway and its vast oil reserves must look attractive on dreich days.

But that's the point about separatism and identity politics, isn't it? Where does it end? If it wasn't so serious it would be funny to hear Johnson and his ministers extolling the virtues of the single UK market – four nations pooling their sovereignty in a Union, eh! All underpinned by the financial heft which the British Treasury and Bank of England can provide. But no funnier than Team Sturgeon making the same case for Secexit that it deplores on the lips of Vote Leave: Take Back Control, whatever the practical cost, because it feels right.



In his clumsy John Bull in a Balmoral Tea Shop way Johnson arrived with an extra £1.9 billion in grants from the UK taxpayer, Scots among them. Scotland's finance minister, Kate Forbes, duly disparaged it along with the pandemic billions (£4.7 billion?) which Rishi Sunak provided to furlough 900,000 Scottish jobs. As with Boris's referendum bus it's easy to massage figures. *Orkney News*' Fiona Grahame explained that Johnson's "£100 million Islands Deal" is actually a three-way split with Shetland and the Hebridean islands councils. What's more, half will come from Edinburgh over 10 years, half over 15 years from London. Party time it ain't.

The painful fact is that both administrations look unimpressive from the outside and have done much in near lockdown during the pandemic, including the latest Spanish quarantine. Strip out England's less populated regions along with the Highlands and Borders and the Covid casualty rates in dense urban areas and care homes won't be very different. Unfortunately it suits both Nicola Sturgeon and Boris ("there are things we could have done better") Johnson to accentuate tensions and "play politics with the pandemic" while accusing each other of doing so. It's all in the Trump playbook: divide, don't unify.

It is unfortunate for the Union – the UK

one as well as the European Union-lite – that Sturgeon is a far steadier politician and better communicator than Johnson, one who has handled the Covid PR well and got the credit for it – a +60 rating from voters while Johnson's is -39. Support for independence has risen to a steady 55:45%, the reverse of 2014. Boris drove away Ruth Davidson, the Unionists' charismatic hope who squeezed the Nats to 37% in 2017.

No wonder blustering Boris steered clear of meeting Sturgeon (how discourteous and cowardly is that?) or that she said she welcomed his visit as a handy 50th birthday present. In consequence of his toxicity and mishandling of the Covid crisis the Nats look set to win well in May's elections to the Scottish parliament, boosted by a tactical 'breakaway' party designed solely to Hoover up extra seats for the SNP in the regional list section.

I could explain how the Labour-devised Holyrood voting system works that way – not as it was intended – but in my experience most voters are more interested in the feeling than the detail. Suffice to advise scepticism towards claims that PR voting is 'fairer' than Westminster's First-Past-The-Post. It's not necessarily fairer; it's just different, like the VAR in football. As Israeli politics usually remind us, it doesn't necessarily produce better government – or Covid management either. In politics there's no substitute for honesty of purpose and competence of administration, both tragically in short supply in touchy-feely times.

No surprise then that the nationalist regime in Scotland has cowed or centralised independent institutions, including the police, media and civil service. Or that the essentially nationalist regime in England has done the same. Both beat up on the British Broadcasting Corporation, as unpatriotic, though the wider world admires it. Why? In his provocative history, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, Professor David Edgerton argues that "Britishness" lasted less than 50 mid-century years and is coming apart.

Before 1914 ours had been a "country with no name," or rather with several ambiguous ones like "the Nation" and "the Empire". Sometimes Americans would talk simply – they still do – of "England", though I did not previously know that between the two world wars Scottish nationalists demanded that the British Empire be rebranded as the "Anglo-Scottish Empire".

In better times these islands would evolve a new constitutional settlement by patient negotiation, rooted in trust, mutual respect and goodwill. All are necessary preconditions to compromise. There's lots for them to do: more power, policy and financial control devolved to

the regions, English regions too, within a quasi-federated system which retained enough fiscal clout to "level up" – there's a phrase – in decayed and impoverished areas. The increasingly discredited Lords could become a regionally-elected senate, though I'm not sure about moving it to York.

And the tax system cries out for modernisation, greater efficiency and fairness, vital to economic success and social harmony. That would take real courage and Sunak certainly needs extra money. Britain is the most centralised state in Europe and, as in so much, its response to Covid-19 has shown its flaws. So does its tax system. Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff feel snubbed by London, but so do Manchester, Brum and Newcastle. In a week when all of Spain has been slapped with a UK quarantine we could add Malaga and San Sebastian to the list.



At least as lethal as Scottish separatism in this bubbling cauldron is parochial English indifference to the value of the Union, some 49% favouring 'English independence' according to one recent poll. It's tempting to pigeonhole such reckless short-sightedness as coming from voters who also backed Brexit. Let's resist it and say that many feel as bruised and left-behind for good reasons as BLM activists do – certainly better ones than armchair nationalists in Maidstone or Morningside.

Instead Nicola's expected triumph next May (Boris isn't alone in getting first-name treatment) is likely to be the cue for renewed demands for another "once in a generation" referendum. She looks like winning it unless the 'Stronger Together' campaign (has Boris the Unionist pinched that one too?) can come up with a powerful emotional appeal that resonates. No.10 briefers – there are so many – insist that Johnson will face down such demands. Do we believe he has the fixity of purpose and political guile to outfox the wily first minister? No, we do not.



As with those trade negotiations with the EU27 the lazy fallback is that Angela Merkel and/or Emmanuel Macron will rescue us from our own ineptitude at the 11th hour. Several EU states have serious separatist movements and would disabuse iScotland's hopes of a smooth re-entry on easy, even generous terms, goes the argument. The flip side is also familiar: an independent Scotland would not only be breaking away from its biggest market – like Brexit Britain is doing from the EU – but its financial problems would be vastly more acute.

At least Northern Ireland, where the



logic of haphazard events push it towards unification with a much-modernised Republic, would have a home to go to. If Johnson's Irish Sea border protocol proves as economically hopeless as the DUP fears, that becomes a distinct possibility. Scotland's challenge is greater. As in 2014, the SNP can't even say what currency it would use. It all sounds very Boris, government by column: make it up as you go along.

No sensible person would want any of this to happen on a romantic wing and columnar prayer, though the EU27 may be beyond caring much. Instead Moscow and Beijing may see opportunities in impoverished disarray, ones which they could only have dreamed of just 20 years ago. Both are already entrenched in high places, as last week's intelligence report showed. Scot Nats who regard the Union of 1707 as an English coup – greased with money after Scotland went bust – should know the risk.

But so should Tory cabinet ministers in London, with their expensive education and history degrees. After Johnson put what turned out to be a stuffed "tiger in the tank" Whitehall sources predicted a basic trade deal with the EU by July, then by August, maybe "quiet hopes of a September trade deal" (the *Times*). This moving staircase would avoid being caught in an October cul-de-sac without enough time to prepare properly (!) for a no-deal outcome if

things go wrong. Hollow laughter.

Now we may be looking at October or later as British firms, already groaning under the multiple costs of pandemic disruption to both supply and demand, quietly tear their hair out. Those few newspapers which do report progress/lack-of note Michel Barnier's hair-tearing frustration at London's unwillingness ("going round in circles") to respond in substance to his concessions. He apparently now accepts that the ECJ will not have over-arching jurisdiction over whatever regulatory regime is finally agreed. Let's hope it is worth the trouble and cost.



Some other arbitration mechanism will be used to confirm the 'level playing field', however bumpy. That sounds quite Norwegian. In return David Frost, EU negotiator turned novice national security adviser ("Banana republic stuff," complains a senior ex-minister), has conceded that Britain will accept a single trade package, not a series of side deals in the Swiss fashion that has annoyed the EU for decades. That is a significant UK concession because it could allow Brussels to punish transgressions in one sector by penalties in another.

These talks are not a morality play with right on one side or the other, as

"Brussels blocking progress" headlines would have us believe. Frost and Barnier are entitled to fear that concessions made too early will simply be pocketed. Brussels fears that the Brits would exploit lax 'rules of origin' to use tariff-and-quota-free EU access to become an offshore assembly hub with lower standards. London thinks it will get a better deal if the 27 genuinely believe Johnson and Dom Cummings will drive us all over the cliff. I believe the hooligans. It keeps me awake because their other leverage scenario, the fantasy of an early UK/US deal, has predictably bitten the dust.

The *FT* reports that Britain has accepted it must lose some non-criminal data sharing rights as one price of avoiding ECJ supervision. It will not be able to self-certify its professional qualifications either. The fisheries dispute – one area where Britain does hold most of the cards and where only six of the EU 27 states are much bothered – can be settled. It will be used as leverage down to the wire. Orkney will be watching closely to protect its export markets as well as its catch, detailed concerns which vary hugely between ports. The Hebrides already flies expensive fish to China.

And, of course, there are financial services, not just the mighty City of London's. Subject to a separate negotiation and fiendishly complicated,

they depend on the wider settlement. The flight of jobs and money from London has been real, but modest, nothing like Macron's wooing anticipated. Instead the most serious stumbling block, all agree, is over state aid to businesses as part of the level playground agenda.

It has been clear for weeks that Johnson's Brexit-compliant cabinet has been stirred by departmental rivalries to fall out over animal welfare and environmental standards, now over state aid rules.

The degree of 'sovereignty' the Cummings faction thinks it needs – not least in governing state aid within the four home nations – amounts to a "vague and non-statutory" commitment to behave. That is not the EU's way, though in practice its own state aid policy is in flux. Virtuous Germany has become its biggest subsidy junkie during successive crises.

It's wise to discount chippy rhetoric on both sides, done to please domestic audiences prior to compromise dressed up as victory. As with McBoris's dealings with Scotland I'd be happier if I saw more evidence of mutual respect, trust and competence to steer us to safe harbour. But as with Covid U-turns, social care packages, immigration, even daft NHS subsidies for bike repairs, it all seems very improvised.

As they say in Orkney the outlook is a bit dreich.

AGENDA



The battle for the Union is already half lost

IAN DUNT on how Brexiteers have set Scotland on a seemingly unstoppable march towards independence



By the time the panic set in, it was too late. Boris Johnson scrambled up to Scotland recently as part of a new effort to save the Union, doing his usual impersonation of an upbeat naughty uncle. But behind the spin you could clearly see the anxiety motivating the trip. It was a tacit admission of what has now become brutally clear to everyone: support for independence is growing remorselessly.

The latest report from Panelbase puts support for independence at 54%, next to 46% for the Union. That's in line with most surveys in the year since Johnson was made prime minister. Only two polls over the last 12 months have suggested the Union would win a referendum, both by one per cent – well within the margin of error.

Meanwhile, Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon surges forward. The latest polling puts her approval rating at three times that of the prime minister in Scotland. The SNP is on 55% support, the

OWN GOALS:

1 Boris Johnson speaks to members of the crew on the Carvela at Stromness Harbour in Orkney

2 Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

Photos: Getty Images

Conservatives on 20%. Johnson insists he will not allow another referendum on independence, but there's little he can do to halt that kind of momentum. If the SNP storms home on a pro-referendum ticket in Scottish elections next May, he'll find it extremely difficult to ignore the mandate. And if he does ignore it, he will create precisely the sort of narrative Sturgeon most wants – Westminster as the jailor, imprisoning Scots against their will, denying them the right to decide on self-determination even when it is clearly supported by the public. Then when a referendum is eventually held, it will be near-impossible to win.

This state of affairs was entirely preventable. It was an accident in slow-motion, in which bystanders consistently pointed out what was happening and were completely ignored.

It started in 2016, when the Brexit result came in. It was immediately obvious that it was going to damage the Union: Scotland and Northern Ireland

voted Remain, England and Wales to Leave.

That situation demanded compromise, a delicate and consensual approach which would respond to the vote with due regard to those who had supported EU membership. And that option was available. It was soft Brexit: leaving the EU but staying in the customs union and single market.

But that wasn't the way it played out. Instead of compromise, the Leave movement became lost in crazed ideological tribalism. Any deviation from hard Brexit, any attempt to stay close to Europe, was branded a form of heresy.

Those who questioned the government's actions, or acknowledged the costs of leaving the

EU, or who simply wanted institutional scrutiny of the process through parliament and the courts, were branded enemies of the people.

That message, which was drummed out by the press and government ministers, tacitly accepted one of the core ideas in Scottish nationalism: if those who opposed the government's approach to Brexit were enemies of the people, and Scotland voted overwhelmingly Remain, then it followed that they were a separate set of people from those in England, where a majority supported it.

Johnson's election as prime minister encapsulated that process. Instead of acknowledging the complexities and difficulties of leaving the EU, all debate was replaced with the deadening, mind-numbing mantra of Get Brexit Done.

You couldn't have





found a politician more likely to push Scotland away if you'd searched for them.

Johnson was a pantomime representation of every caricature Scottish nationalists deployed against the English political class – selfish, disdainful, ignorant, utterly uninterested in events north of the border, brazenly dishonest and fundamentally incapable.

There is a reason Sturgeon welcomes his little trips up to Scotland to save the Union. She understands that every word he speaks, no matter the content, undermines his own case by virtue of the fact that it emerges from his lips.

Even if his own personality hadn't undermined him, his actions would have. Johnson's newfound argument for the Union replicates, almost to the word, the Remain arguments for the EU.

"I think the country is far better together," he said during his recent visit, revealing a degree of hypocrisy and double-think which is startling even in someone with his record.

The prime minister's entire political project over the last few years has been to degrade and undermine that kind of proposition. It was that we were worse off together; that nations should not cooperate for mutual advancement but instead break off on their own, that economic considerations take second place to cultural affinities. Now he reaps what he sows, his own logic undone by his record.

His deal with the EU went a step further even than his rhetoric. No matter what Johnson says, he has in fact conceded that there will be a customs border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

That is perhaps the single most striking development in the Scottish independence debate since the Brexit result itself. If Northern Ireland can break off into its own customs territory, then why not Scotland?

Doing so would allow Scotland to disconnect from Britain's trading ecosystem and head into EU membership.

That won't all be plain sailing – the UK single market is worth more to Scotland than the EU one is. But Johnson's deal showed it was possible. He handed Sturgeon a de-facto acceptance of the practicalities of Scottish independence.

He also offered her a powerful set of political arguments. Any suspicion Scotland had about English indifference, about the Union being a bundle of chains rather than a bond of mutual respect, has now been vindicated.

Scotland voted against Brexit. It didn't matter. Scotland wanted a moderate implementation of the referendum result. It didn't matter. Scotland despised Johnson. It didn't matter. They did it anyway.

Once upon a time, Unionists could at least argue that Westminster provided stable, competent government. But that case no longer holds either. It's more like being chained to a someone who occasionally flies into fits of rage and starts waving a knife around threatening to cut his own legs off.

In the face of that kind of mania, Sturgeon has projected an image of firm, reasonable, reliable authority. Her response to Brexit was evidence-based and unemotional, in stark contrast to the gibbering hysterics of the Leave leadership in London.

During the pandemic she has provided a more consistent and reassuring leadership than that available in Downing Street. Anyone looking for competent, experienced and judicious governance would be hard put to select Westminster over Holyrood.

But in the end, it wasn't the SNP's strong performance which brought us to this point. It was English nationalism – a political movement which simply didn't care about Scotland, which treated it with indifference and became lost in a deranged culture war over Europe which it could neither articulate nor sensibly pursue.

This was all preventable. Every step of the way, the warnings were issued and every step of the way they were ignored.

And now here we are: watching Britain tear itself away from Europe, and then Scotland tear itself away from the Union.

A once great power carving itself up into smaller and smaller units, for no discernible purpose. That is what English nationalism has created. A man alone in a raft, lost at sea, insisting he is a navy.

Trading blows

Campaigner ELLEN LEES on how the government's trade legislation leaves the NHS vulnerable



When the government's Trade Bill – which sets the framework for the UK's future trade agreements – came back to the House of Commons recently it was unsurprisingly filled with gaping holes.

First of all, it contained no protections for our NHS. Without that we're facing higher drug prices, private companies being able to sue the government if it tries to limit their ability to profit from our healthcare, and privatisation of the NHS being ramped up and locked in to international trade treaties that will be increasingly difficult for future governments to unravel. And we know that Donald Trump will be pushing hard for all of these things in any trade deal he signs off on.

Worse still, the bill didn't provide a mechanism for parliament to properly scrutinise or vote on future trade deals.

Failing to write this into the legislation means that the government can negotiate, agree and sign up to trade arrangements behind closed doors, without MPs getting a look in.

It means the public will have no idea which parts of our NHS are being handed on a plate to Trump and the American private healthcare industry. And it means the government will get carte blanche to do as they fancy with little accountability from the media, parliament or public.

These gaping holes in the legislation shouldn't necessarily be an insurmountable problem. No bill is ever perfect. The parliamentary process is designed to finesse and strengthen legislation at each stage.

But that hasn't happened. Instead, Tory MPs lined up one by one to vote down amendments that would have protected our NHS and given parliament

a final say on trade deals. So much for parliamentary sovereignty. If Brexit was about taking back control, the Tories have got a funny way of showing it.

As Caroline Lucas pointed out in the debate, the Trade Bill, as it's currently worded, would give far more powers over UK-EU trade deals to members of the European parliament that it would to those in the UK parliament.

But we're all used to Boris Johnson's promises not being worth the paper (or buses) they're written on. And the lies are just as transparent on the NHS, as on Brexit.

Tory MPs love to repeat that they won't be selling off our NHS, that it won't be included in any future trade deal. Laughably, they point to manifesto promises that the NHS will not be 'on the table'. Yet their manifesto is about as far as it's possible to get from a legally binding commitment.

We don't need warm words or reassurances. We need concrete red lines in the Trade Bill.

So what happens now? With the Trade Bill having passed through the House of Commons, it's now over to the Lords.

MPs might have failed us, so it's time for peers to step up to the plate.

Johnson might be resting easy on an 80 seat majority in the Commons, but he has no such luck in the upper chamber.

The campaign group We Own It – which fights to protect public services from privatisation – is calling for the House of Lords to pass the amendments that the Commons failed to.

And we're bringing the public with us. Last week, we launched a petition calling for the Lords to protect our NHS from trade deals.

Within 24 hours, 80,000 people had added their name – with the number going up and up ever since.

The public are crystal clear. They won't stand for our NHS being carved up and sold off in trade deals.

■ Ellen Lees is the campaigns officer at We Own It

IN NEED OF PROTECTION: It's time to fight for the future of the NHS

Photo: Getty Images



AGENDA



The giant who made 'good trouble'

Bonnie Greer

**Playwright,
Author,
Critic**



A book that I wrote but never finished is called *The Radiant Day: The Story of The March on Washington, August 1963*.

It began by looking at some of the leader figures involved in the event: "In August, 1963, Bayard Rustin is 51 years old. James Baldwin is 39 years old. Martin Luther King Jr. is 34 years old. And student leader John Lewis is 23 years old." The first three of those men have been dead for several decades. Lewis died earlier this month after a six-month battle with pancreatic cancer, at the age of 80.

The hardest thing about being alive for a long time are the aches and the pains... of history.

You have to endure what feels like the complete ignorance of history itself, the

deeply ahistorical reality of most people; the belief by the young that the past was a failure. And that they alone can rectify it. But you know that you once believed the same thing, too. Human nature.

But I was lucky at my university.

We students back then were enraged by the election of Richard Nixon. We blamed this on the so-called centrists of the day who had *de facto* colluded, as far as we were concerned, with the right.

In those days the motto was: 'Never trust anyone over 30.' That gives you an idea about what 30 years old was perceived to be like half a century ago. We babyboomers believed that we would overcome them. Everyone. And we did.

But this is not the point. The point is that we still paid attention to what had gone before. We knew about it. Plus we had profs who were not cowed by us; not full of apology for their education, their point of view.

Notwithstanding this, we invaded their offices anyway; ransacked their files; shut down their classes and their universities. We yelled at them in class, too, but they taught us anyway; taught us history anyway.

Maybe what they taught was just the

bits that they wanted us to know. But if we were not too lazy, nor too stupid, nor jaded, we explored further. And we saw history on TV and knew what it was.

One thing that my history prof, Dr Turner, told us was that Richard Nixon would disgrace his office. He documented Nixon's trajectory, as congressman from California, then vice president to Dwight Eisenhower, on to the late 1950s when many of us were old enough to understand a tiny bit about the world and that it did not revolve around us.

The world was television; we were the first media-orientated generation. The first president we were ever conscious of was assassinated live on lunchtime telly while we were at school. And we watched the civil rights movement on TV. We watched almost the entire arc of it until it no longer spoke to us.

It no longer spoke to us because if the old had done things right, there would be no need to march. We knew that we were right. The movement was our big brothers and sisters, and mothers and fathers, and aunts and uncles out there. Old people. What the old do never speaks to the young. Which is probably as it should be. But the bad thing about that is

that stuff is done over again and over again until people forget that stuff actually ever happened at all. And then the people are back at ground zero. But John Lewis never was.

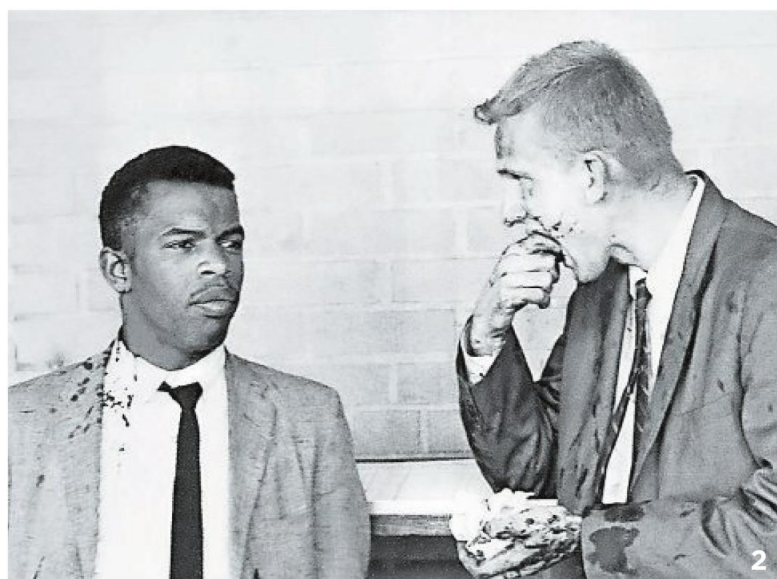
He carried on from what had been created in the past. He lived and he made history.

Lewis was born in Alabama in 1940 and grew up in the state. He first heard Martin Luther King Jr's voice on the radio one day when he was 15, and decided that this was a clarion call to his life. Later that year, he closely followed Dr King during his ultra-daring Montgomery bus boycott, which propelled him to national prominence.

Lewis became dedicated to non-violence and civil rights, and organised sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee. He helped de-segregate them, which meant that if you were African American you could finally sit down and have a cup of coffee instead of being ordered to leave or be served outside in the street.

Lewis was arrested many times and jailed, and jail was not where you wanted to end up if you were African American and in the South.

AGENDA



CAMPAIGNER:
1 John Lewis on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, 2015. Lewis was beaten by police on March 7, 1965, during an attempted civil rights march across the bridge

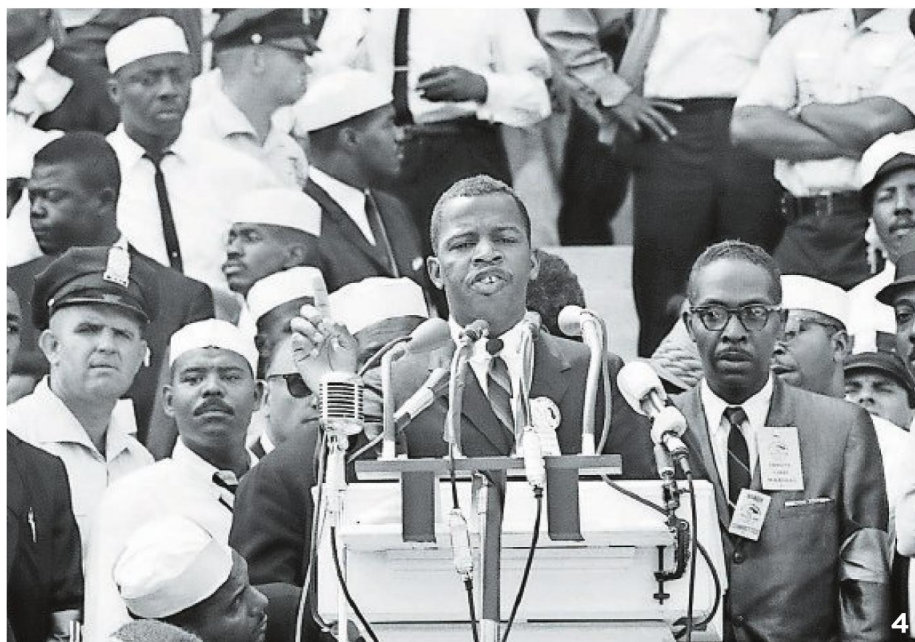
2 John Lewis and fellow Freedom Rider James Zwerg after they were beaten in Montgomery

3 Lewis (light coat, centre), is beaten by state troopers. Lewis sustained a fractured skull in the violence on 'Bloody Sunday' 1965 during the attempted march from Selma to Montgomery

4 Lewis speaks at the Lincoln Memorial ahead of a march on Washington, 1963

5 Lewis is taken into custody after he was beaten in racial violence in Montgomery during one of the original Freedom Rides, 1961

Photos: Getty Images



He was outspoken and never allowed anyone to shut him up. His goal was to make what he called "good trouble" – the kind that led to justice.

In 1961, he became one of the original 'Freedom Riders', the fount of some of the anxious moments of my late childhood and early adolescence, as their activities became a staple of the evening news.

The Freedom Riders were white and black students who rode interstate buses into the segregated South, where laws still prohibited black and white passengers from sitting next to each other on public transport. Being the child of a Mississippian, I knew how dangerous their journeys were.

Lewis was beaten up and, at times, arrested. The amount of violence he endured was appalling. He faced baseball bats, chains, lead pipes and stones. He was beaten unconscious on one occasion and left lying at the Greyhound bus station in Montgomery. Decades later, a former Klansman involved in the violence against him apologised to him on television. "It's OK. I forgive you," Lewis immediately responded. That was the kind of man John Lewis was.

While researching my book, I

BRIDGE BATTLE

Since his death, there have been calls to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge, in Selma, after John Lewis. The crossing, over the Alabama River, was the scene of a brutal attack by police on peaceful civil rights marchers – led by Lewis – on March 7, 1965.

Edmund Pettus was a US senator and Confederate army officer who also served as a grand dragon in the Ku Klux Klan. Lewis, however, had previously voiced opposition to changing the name of the bridge.

discovered that the March on Washington almost never happened. The organisers were not sure that anyone would show up. Plus this was an event that was going out on television in the afternoon. The TV schedules were cleared. There were

lots of anxieties behind the scenes. Some of these were about Lewis. The various organisations involved were worried about what he might say.

He was fiery; he had been through hell; he was young and who knew what would happen when he gave his speech.

Before he delivered it, he had to submit the wording to the organisers. His line "Which side is the federal government on?" was removed, so as not to offend the president and his brother, the attorney general. A line still had to be walked.

Lewis was the youngest speaker on the day and, at the time of his death, the last left alive.

Two years after the March on Washington, on March 7, 1965 – America's 'Bloody Sunday' – Lewis and fellow activist Hosea Williams led more than 600 marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

This was the first attempt to stage a march along the 54 miles from Selma to the state capital, Montgomery, to demand the right to vote for black people.

As the marchers crossed the bridge they encountered a wall of state troopers, who ordered them to disperse. When they did not, they were tear-gassed, charged at

by mounted officers and beaten with night sticks. Lewis' skull was fractured and he carried the scars for the rest of his life.

It was scenes like this that led my generation to choose the option of the Black Panther Party; urban uprisings and a generational 'no' to non-violence.

Later, many did what most people do: get a job; have a family; buy a house, settle down. But Lewis really never did. He continued with his commitment to non-violence and ended his days as Democratic congressman for Georgia's 5th District.

Considered the conscience of the House of Representatives, he served his district and his country there for 33 years.

To high and low, old and young, he always spoke truth to power: There was no alternative, for John Lewis, to that.

He was a champion of LGBTQ rights. And for national health insurance for everyone. He wrote a graphic novel for young people about his days in the movement so that they would know and not forget. All of this and more was what he called making "good trouble". "Good trouble" was who John Robert Lewis was.

Tortois^{es}.



Join us at one of our digital ThinkIns

Right now, it's more important than ever to stay connected. Our daily digital ThinkIns have brought thousands of members closer together and their voices have shaped our reporting. ThinkIns are open to Tortoise members and their guests, take a 30 day free trial to join in the conversation.

MONDAY 3 AUGUST
Infodemic: Who's really behind the Covid conspiracies?

WEDNESDAY 5 AUGUST
A world without prisons: the case for decarceration

THURSDAY 6 AUGUST
In conversation with Deborah Frances-White and Nikesh Shukla

MONDAY 10 AUGUST
The post-Covid rent revolution: who wins and who loses?

TUESDAY 11 AUGUST
In conversation with Matt Haig

WEDNESDAY 12 AUGUST
Do women really make better leaders?

TUESDAY 18 AUGUST
In conversation with Isabel Wilkerson

WEDNESDAY 19 AUGUST
Will the virus cure medical science of its sexism?

To sign up for any of these, take a free trial at tortoisemedia.com/thinkins
You can cancel at any time.

There has been encouraging news about the progress of various vaccine trials. But, says DUNCAN MATTHEWS, the frenetic deals being struck by countries and companies raise many important issues



The University of Oxford recently published promising news about the results from the phase one/two trials of the vaccine it is developing for Covid-19. The clinical trials, involving 1,077 volunteers in the UK aged 18-55, showed that the AZD1222 vaccine appeared to be safe and generated the all-important dual antibody and T-cell immune response.

Yet as encouraging as this is, the public-partnership that underpins the project is a concern. Much of the funding came from the UK government, which announced a £65.5 million grant to the University of Oxford in March.

Other funding had already come from outside the UK, including from the German Centre for Infection Research (DZIF) and the Oslo-based Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) so this was not solely a UK initiative.

Also in March, Oxford reached a licensing agreement with AstraZeneca to commercialise and manufacture the vaccine. But despite this work being largely paid for by the public purse, very little is known about the details of this partnership. There is a lot we don't know about who will own the intellectual property, how it will be shared and at what price it will be sold.

The same is equally true of numerous other public-private partnerships to develop a Covid-19 vaccine.

And while this global pandemic surely demands a globally coordinated response, governments have instead been clamouring to secure their own supplies of the vaccine.

If the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine proves successful, the company has undertaken to manufacture up to 30 million doses that will be available for people in the UK by September. This is part of an agreement to deliver 100 million doses in total that would be made available to other countries, but the UK will get access first.

In the same vein, the UK has placed advance purchase orders for other vaccine prospects: 30 million doses for the one being developed by Pfizer and BioNTech; 60 million for another from Valneva of France; and, this week, 60 million doses of a treatment being developed by GSK and Sanofi.

Again, these agreements lack transparency. We don't know, for example, whether the taxpayer will

The opaque deals that keep us in the dark on vaccines

still pay if the drugs don't work.

We are seeing the same kind of approach elsewhere. In May, the US reached its own supply agreement with AstraZeneca for AZD1222. The Americans are investing \$1.2 billion (£942 million) in return for a 30,000-person vaccine trial in the US, and the manufacturing capacity to produce at least 300 million doses, with the first doses to be delivered as early as October. Similarly, the US has a supply deal with the Pfizer/BioNTech project.

Elsewhere, AstraZeneca has agreed to supply 400 million doses of AZD1222 to Europe starting from the end of the year through the Inclusive Vaccines Alliance (IVA), set up by Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands.

When Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, unveiled the EU vaccine strategy days later, reportedly to ensure that the union was not left behind in the vaccine race by big spenders like the US, she hailed the IVA as an important step towards joint action between the member states. Tellingly, there was no mention of access to AZD1222 for countries outside the EU.

For other countries, AstraZeneca announced a \$750 million agreement in June with CEPI and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to make, procure and distribute 300 million doses of AZD1222 with delivery starting at the end of the year. AstraZeneca also signed an agreement with the Serum

VEILED VACCINES: An electron microscope image of the virus that causes Covid-19. Virus particles are shown emerging from the surface of cells cultured in the lab. The spikes on the outer edge of the virus particles give coronaviruses their name, crown-like.

Photo: Getty Images

Institute of India to sub-license AZD1222 to supply 1 billion doses to low- and middle-income countries, with a commitment to provide 400 million by year end. In all cases, little is known about the terms of the agreements.

One important aspect of this lack of transparency concerns pricing. For example, the deals with the IVA and CEPI/Gavi say AstraZeneca will supply the vaccine at no profit during the pandemic. This leaves open the prospect that 'no profit' will cease to apply if the World Health Organization declares that this is no longer a pandemic. Because the terms of these agreements have not been fully disclosed, we just don't know.

Without doubting the commitment of AstraZeneca to its stated objective of broad and equitable access to this vaccine, these opaque agreements raise concerns about precisely how publicly funded research, conducted by publicly owned universities, is being privatised.

Other approaches are possible. Along with the UK funding package for the University of Oxford, the government also allocated £18.5 million to Imperial College London for a different Covid-19 vaccine project. Having completed clinical trials, Imperial announced on July 17 that it was proceeding to the next trial phase, involving 105 participants aged 18-75.

Imperial has formed a new social enterprise, VacEquity Global Health,

to rapidly develop this vaccine and distribute it as widely as possible in the UK and overseas, including to low- and middle-income countries. This is in partnership with Morningside Ventures, a fund based in Hong Kong that invests in companies for the public good.

Rather than partnering with one company, the Imperial model envisages links with multiple manufacturers and waiving royalties and charging a modest amount for its vaccine. Agreements to purchase, manufacture and distribute the vaccine are still being negotiated.

It remains to be seen whether this social enterprise approach proves more successful in achieving equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines in the longer term, but it seems more in line with how we should be tackling this crisis.

Public money invested in publicly funded institutions should be treated as a public good, not as private intellectual property rights to be licensed and traded by private companies without full and proper public scrutiny. The vaccine nationalism that we have seen in the past couple of months only encourages this. At the very least, these agreements need to be fully transparent to address these concerns.

■ Duncan Matthews is a professor of intellectual property law at Queen Mary University of London; this article also appears at theconversation.com

LETTERS: Have your say, email letters@theneweuropean.co.uk

Russian meddling makes EU stronger than before

Russian interference in the Brexit referendum ("The Russia Report and what it doesn't tell us", *TNE* #204) was driven, apparently, by its desire to weaken the European Union. I think recent events actually suggest the meddling has strengthened the EU.

Negotiations over the EU budget and post-Covid rescue plan have now concluded with an agreement. Arguably, as a result, the EU is now more cohesive and integrated than before.

Imagine how these negotiations would have gone if Britain was still in the EU and had been involved. Shouts of "no, no, no" and "there is not enough in it for us" would have rung around the Berlaymont and negotiations would have been more fractious and destructive. Increasingly Britain had become the squeaky wheel on the EU project. So possibly our departure is a silver lining for the EU. For the people of Britain, not so much.

Ann Scurfield
London W4

Whilst Vladimir Putin's Russia is clearly a malignant actor on the world stage, sowing division and hate in order to reap the rewards of dividing the West, he is not, thank heavens, all-powerful, neither is he a perfect strategist.

If Johnson's Britain had been in the room during the EU's Covid recovery fund negotiations, I for one am sure they would have ended in failure. But no doubt to the dismay of the Kremlin, not to mention British Brexiters, the talks ended in a deal, albeit a messy one.

One step to a stronger Europe, and thus a stronger bulwark against the hatred and division peddled by Putin

Michael Hanks
Waltham Cross

To me what the Russia Report has highlighted most of all is that pro-Brexit politicians do not care how they achieve their aim of leaving the European Union.

They choose to pretend to be asleep at the wheel while the population is bombarded with disinformation and politicians are happy taking money from oligarchs for lunches or tennis matches.

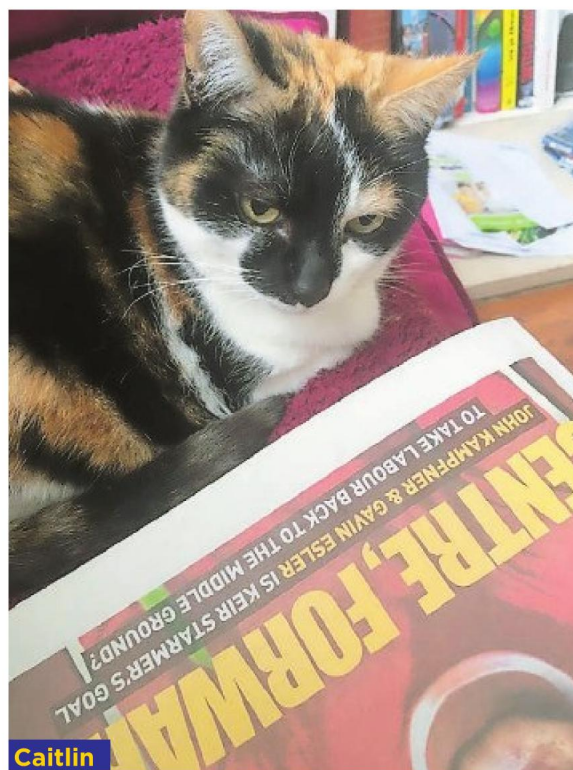
They are trying to spin it that there was no evidence of Russian interference, when, really, they took their eyes off the ball.

Lib Dem MP Layla Moran has written to the prime minister requesting an investigation into meddling in the Brexit referendum and we must ensure this happens. Let's not take our eyes off the ball.

Annette Shaw
Oxford

Johnson, Banks, Bridgen, Rees-Mogg et al have got it completely wrong, as usual. As

Animal readers of THE NEW EUROPEAN



Caitlin



Miranda-Jane Hopper

Reader Louis Etheridge writes: "Here's Miranda-Jane Hopper displaying deep concern about Germany's bumpy road out of lockdown. Her German is rudimentary at best. She considers *TNE* a multi-faceted resource of thought-provoking journalism, emotional support, something to chew and something to pee on. As do we all."

Reader Darren Dodd writes: "This is Caitlin who lives in the Remain heartland of Hornsey, North London. She's always first to scan through *The New European* each week for any updates on the ending of freedom of movement."

■ Does the animal who runs your household read *TNE*? Send photographic evidence and crucial biographical details to letters@theneweuropean.co.uk, putting 'Animal Readers' in the subject field

a pro-EU British patriot, I did not hope for a smoking gun in the Russia Report because I knew even last November that if there was one, it would have been decommissioned and the serial number filed off. Or, as it turns out, not looked for in the first place in case it turned out to be an arsenal of Kalashnikovs.

Phil Green

A substantial number of Conservative MPs must be happy that social distancing requirements keep them out of the Commons chamber, especially on Wednesdays. Last week's PMQs saw their leader and our prime minister giving a performance that beggared belief in his response to Keir Starmer's questions about the Russia Report.

Faced with having to explain the delay in releasing the aforementioned report, Boris Johnson resorted to his customary bluster, appealing with outstretched arms to his backbenchers, in the process repeatedly turning his back on the speaker (to the latter's irritation) and making laboured attempts at jokes.

The enforced absence of these MPs allowed them to squirm in embarrassment in the privacy of their homes and offices instead of suffering

the humiliation of witnessing the debacle in the chamber.

Cringe-making though Johnson's desperately inept performance may have been, the real cause for alarm is that this duplicitous charlatan, not content with trying to conceal the extent of Russian interference, seems only too willing to inflict incalculable damage to our already vulnerable economy by engineering a no-deal Brexit.

Anthony West
Folkestone

It may be true that as a result of a strange lack of curiosity there is no evidence for Russian interference in UK politics, but we hardly need to search for it. We simply need to heed the words of the man who was the country's ambassador to Britain between 2011-19.

As reported by Luke Harding in *Shadow State*, Alexander Yakovenko's reaction to Brexit was that it meant "his time in London was a triumph. He had smashed the Brits to the ground. 'It will be a long time before they rise again,' he reportedly told a fellow diplomat."

Hardly the attitude of a benign foreign state or normal diplomatic language.

Christopher Sparey-Green
London SE1

Own fault

Ben Bradshaw, like Andrew Adonis and Alastair Campbell before him, is really talking nonsense when he blames the Lib Dems for the last general election ("Why Starmer is spot on about Brexit", *TNE* #204).

It is unfathomable that 13 MPs, plus those few who crossed the floor from other parties, could wield such power. As Jeremy Corbyn had called for an election nearly every time he spoke and even Ben Bradshaw voted for one, Labour must own this catastrophe, stop blaming others, and accept they made a political misjudgement on a devastating scale.

Fleur Ball
Plymouth

Thrown away

John Kampfner ("My travel sickness", *TNE* #204) rues the fact that when we finally leave the European Union, we will once more become foreigners in those lands a few miles beyond our shores.

It reminds me of my first visit to Riga in 2008. At the hotel, I was shocked to be required to fill in an 'alien registration form' even though Latvia had joined the EU four years earlier.

The idea I will once again be regarded as an alien in a part of the world which I have worked hard to promote, and regard as my second home, appals me.

Tony Olsson
Kirkby-in-Ashfield

John Kampfner's piece on freedom of movement is so sad. I remember so well those days of travel to and from France in the 1970s.

During the five-year transition into the common market, as I think it was then, I travelled to and from France on business and occasional holidays, several days a month for many years. It gradually became easier as time went by, but now we are sadly building barriers again.

My days of crossing the Channel are at an end as I can now no longer afford health insurance. I am isolated and imprisoned in my own little island with nothing to look forward to.

My grandchildren have now had their work opportunities taken from them and I as an octogenarian will see no benefits of Brexit. Permission please to go away and die quietly?

Alan Craw
Old Whittington

It was very kind of you to print my letter regarding potential problems in travelling in the EU ("How not to go around the world in 180 days", Letters, *TNE* #204). Post-Brexit the government is

Could Trump refuse to go even if he loses?

TIM BRADFORD

What's going on?

THE USA IS A GROWN UP COUNTRY, NOT A CRAZY ROGUE STATE



THE SUPREME COURT WOULD NOT ALLOW A TRUMP POWER GRAB



PATRIOTIC FREEDOM LOVERS VOW TO STOP AN AUTHORITARIAN COUP



THE US SYSTEM'S CHECKS AND BALANCES THWART TYRANTS...



apparently prepared to offer Europeans 180-day stays in the UK but will accept only 90-day spells for us to visit Europe.

This being one of the few aspects of the government's negotiations where we may hope to persuade them to change their mind, I should be grateful if you could draw your readers' attention to the campaign to coordinate letters to MPs to draw attention to the matter: bit.ly/3f346Ss

There is also a petition which has only just gone live: bit.ly/300DHk6

John Frazer

Yet another piece of underhand behaviour by the 'Brexit at any cost' government has just slipped out; we will no longer have reciprocal medical cover in EU countries.

Many millions of us who have European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) will not be able to use them after 2020. The free card covers medical aid across the EU in much the same way the NHS does here.

Travel insurance will now need to include this basic healthcare cover, as well as emergencies, and premiums will inevitably cost us more.

This is just another example that Boris's "oven-ready deal" with the EU is a turkey and it is British citizens who are getting stuffed.

Hugh Janes
Plymouth

We now know that we are heading for a minimal or no-deal with the EU. This will also mean that we will be outside the collaborative safety and security measures of the EU.

We will be much less safe and secure. The government will have failed in its duty.

A track record of lack of preparation despite expert advice and warnings, inadequate emergency planning, woefully delayed, scattergun responses. No wonder they were so keen to announce quarantine for arrivals from Spain – an attempt to show they can act swiftly, but at best a side-show.

One suspects they will be ill-equipped

BETTER LETTERS

In these unprecedented times, we are receiving an unprecedented amount of correspondence. To stand the best chance of having your letter published in full...

■ Email letters@
theneweuropean.co.uk
before 9am on Tuesday for
possible inclusion in the
following Thursday's edition.

■ Put the contents of your
letter in the body of your
email rather than adding an
attachment, such as a PDF.

■ Please be concise. With
limited space available,
letters over five paragraphs
long will almost always be
edited before printing.
Thank you!

to stem the tide next January. No doubt Johnson will move his throne to the Kent beaches and command the waters of insecurity and economic pain to recede.

Anne Green

Holy incorrect

'Liberal' is a word often abused, misused and derided, particularly by those with a non-liberal agenda. So I read Tim Farron's article ("This liberal will always defend real liberalism", *TNE* #204) with great interest – twice.

The second time I ignored his reference to "faith" in the first column and then, where he started making claims for his



religion, I substituted the word "humanism". I then found I could agree with him, entirely.

To claim that "authentic liberalism has its source in Christianity" is nonsense, though of course, as a liberal, I will defend to the last his right to believe it. But when he seems to claim that his religion somehow has more goodness than any other religion, I find that to be quite illiberal, and potentially offensive to those of other faiths and none.

Surely most (all?) religions are based in humanism and, in point of fact, it is humanism that is the source of liberalism?

In our representative democracy, our party leaders need to be humanist first. So proclaiming 'I am a Christian', implies that you put your faith above others, which is counter to the equalities principle needed to be a liberal leader in a multi-faith society.

Peter Tyack
Severn Beach

takes precedence and the place of Christianity and religion in relation to liberalism, politics and individual identity: "Human groupings have one main purpose: to assert everyone's right to be different, to be special, to think, feel and live in his or own way. People join together to win or defend this right."

From his experience as a writer under Stalin, Grossman follows immediately with a stark warning: "But this is where a terrible, fateful error is born: the belief that these groupings in the name of a race, a God, a party or a State are the very purpose of life and not simply a means to an end. No! The only true and lasting meaning of the struggle for life lies in the individual, in his (sic) modest peculiarities and in his right to these peculiarities."

In terms of real liberalism and the tone of political discourse today I suspect Tim might agree with Grossman's next point: "Let's be kind and attentive to the individual... Let's begin with respect, compassion and love for the individual – or we'll never get anywhere."

Ian GL Jones
Middlesbrough

Tim Farron is right to be concerned about the attacks on freedom of speech, but as so often in discussions on this subject he misses the point which is that no civilised society can possibly tolerate absolute freedom of speech.

Think about it. Are we prepared to tolerate anti-Semitic utterances? There are people in this country who would advocate that anyone who does not belong to their religion should be killed – are we prepared to tolerate them openly advocating this?

The real problem is drawing the line and in enthusiastically enforcing it. This cannot be left to the government and we need to set up an independent and broadly based body, adequately publicly funded, to police the situation before abuse becomes more widespread.

Deputy Dean
Maresfield

The misappropriation of both identity politics and liberalism are key points in Tim Farron's article.

Identity politics is embedded in the emergence of cultural politics in Britain during the late decades of the 20th century, where 'culture' was defined as "the way we live" (Raymond Williams) and "a site of struggle" (EP Thompson).

Vasily Grossman in *Life and Fate* also raises the question of whose opinion

AGENDA

▶ From page 15

German blight

The Great European Lives article about Heinrich Böll (*TNE* #203, **pictured below**), repeats his support for the idea that the Nazis' fascist ideology could have only succeeded in Germany.

Not all Germans were *gehorsam* (obedient) – my own German relatives were a bolshy lot who loathed Hitler and all his works, and to the end of their days blamed him and only him for all the mayhem, and all the misery they went through.

But what could they do? My grandfather railed against Hitler when his only son was killed and only narrowly escaped a concentration camp himself; my feisty aunt refused to do the Hitler salute and also got into trouble, but with a husband on the Russian front as a mechanic, and a young son she went no further.

Would we rebel if we knew our lives and our families were in danger? I doubt I would.

Chris Shepherd



Market farces

Nick Roberts' letter cataloguing the failures of the present Tory ministers ("Totally foxed", *TNE* #203) exposed a band of ideologues who might have economics – even PPE – degrees, but have not worked with the 'lower deck' in the forces nor on the shop floor and cannot run a jumble stall.

They might not be mouthing Communist Party leaflets like other ideologues, but they are just as rigid in their faith that markets matter more than for everything, even when the demographic in a scheme hasn't two pennies to rub together.

Frank Adam
Prestwich

Domineering

I am writing to express my 100% support for Nazir Afzal's inquiry into the Dominic Cummings fiasco, ("Was

everyone treated the same?" *TNE* #204).

What a sense of relief that someone is not letting this iniquity stay brushed under the carpet.

Pat Brandwood
Broadstone

Scot free

Alastair Campbell is too kind to Nicola Sturgeon ("I am not going to come out of this the same as I went into it", *TNE* #202).

In early June Scotland had the third-highest death rate per million population from Covid-19 in the world – Belgium 842, England 767, and Scotland 733 – and the main reason for the lower rate than England is the lower population density.

Scotland has followed very similar measures to England but had the powers to act differently. I am surprised that Alastair Campbell falls into the nationalist trap of allowing the pandemic to be used to differentiate Scotland from the rest of the UK in the hope of increasing support for separatism.

Richard Watson
Glasgow

The EU's new economic recovery package includes grants for rural areas and the higher education sector, as well as environmental projects. Countries' allocations are based on the projected economic harm resulting from Covid, and Scotland may have received something in the region of £5.4 billion.

By contrast, the UK government has allocated only £3.7 billion to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As an independent member of the EU, Scotland would clearly have been a major beneficiary from such an arrangement and yet again the UK's withdrawal from the EU continues to cost us dear.

Alex Orr
Edinburgh EH9

We see in the personal behaviour of both Donald Trump and Boris Johnson the sort of casual misogyny that leads others to think that disregarding women – even women in positions of authority and influence – is OK.

So it comes as no surprise that on his visit to Scotland, not only did Johnson make no effort to contact or co-ordinate with Scotland's first minister, but Nicola Sturgeon was not even given prior notice of his visit.

For Sturgeon it must have been like waking up and finding a neighbour's fat tomcat stinking up your nice living room.

Amanda Baker
Edinburgh

Well fed

It seems an age since John Major, **pictured**, set the UK's face against the concept of a federal Europe, characterising it as "the F-word". How ironic then, that "the F-word" may now hold the answer to the increasingly dysfunctional constitution of the United Kingdom. The shape of a federal government structure for the UK is not too difficult to make out in an otherwise cloudy political crystal ball.

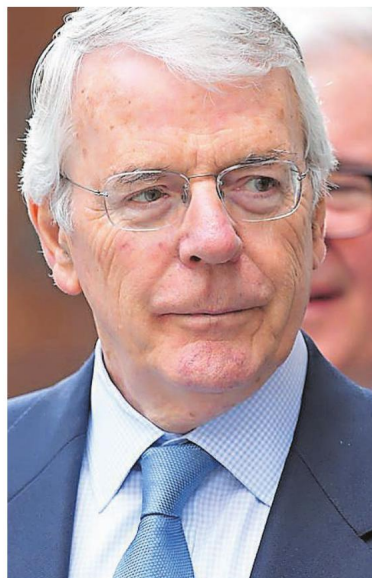
An island Federal Republic of Ireland

consisting of two states, Eire and Ulster; makes geopolitical sense.

An island Federal Republic of Britain consisting of Scotland, Wales, and England is no longer an outlandish concept. England could itself be separated to North and South (Yorkshire's self-image is not dissimilar to Bavaria's).

Labour should promise a national commission to debate constitutional reform, with a federal government underpinned by a PR system high on the agenda. The SNP would support it and a Labour/SNP alliance at the next general election could deliver it.

Paul Stein
Pickering



Gold blend

Re: Peter Trudgill's "Pick of the portmanteaus" *TNE* #203. Undoubtedly the finest portmanteau I've come across was during the interminable electrification of the London to Bristol railway. We were frequently subjected to "bustitution" to get us from wherever they were working on the railway to our destination.

Paul Foss
Bristol

The plural of "portmanteau" is "portmanteaux".

Peter Farrell-Vinay

Sorry excuse

"Maybe there were things we could have done differently, as I've said, and of course there will be time to understand what exactly we could have done, or done differently," says Boris Johnson. What a pathetic attempt at an apology to the British people for the way that he and the UK government have handled the whole pandemic. They didn't have to look very far across the Channel to see how the European countries were fighting it, but plainly decided they knew better. Tell it to the fathers, mothers, sons and daughters who have lost family and loved ones needlessly due to their negligent and 'B-word' obsessed attitude.

David Perrin
Bridgend

The prime minister has described the government's response to outbreaks of Covid-19 as "doing a whack-a-mole". As *Private Eye* recently pointed out, the chief meaning for 'whack-a-mole' in the *OED* is: "Used with reference to a problem which is addressed in a piecemeal or superficial manner, resulting merely in temporary, minor or localised improvement, or to a situation in which problems continually or unpredictably arise."

Perhaps this is the underlying approach to all of the government's issues and challenges – is the truth actually being hidden in plain sight? For once, and maybe the first time, Boris might not be lying to us.

Nick Roberts
Selly Oak

Ill feeling

After voting down an amendment that would have protected the NHS from US influence in any post-Brexit trade deals, Conservative MPs have effectively voted to abolish our health service as we know it.

It means private US healthcare corporations will be able to operate as they do in the US under the NHS brand in the UK.

Everyone needs to know that the NHS as we currently know it will cease to exist at midnight on January 1, 2021.

Safir Ahmed

Fat chance

Of course Boris had an obesity problem. Every time he hid in a fridge he scoffed all the cheese.

Peter Merre
East London

WHERE TO FIND US



WEBSITE
theneweuropean.co.uk



TWITTER
[@theneweuropean](https://twitter.com/theneweuropean)



FACEBOOK
facebook.com/theneweuropean



PODCAST
audioboom.com/channel/the-new-european

Podcast also available on iTunes, Spotify and iOS podcast app

Alastair Campbell

Editor-at-Large



Several moons ago, way back in April, I wrote here about 20 things I was missing in lockdown. Number 1 was 'Burnley FC', and my God we have had a good run since the Premier League resumed with fan-less football. But fear not, ye poor souls who fail to share my passion for football, this is not a sports column. It is about kissing or, more precisely, about greeting.

Number 4 in my missing list was 'Abroad'. Number 6 was 'France'. Number 20 was 'La Bise'...

"20. La Bise: Might Coronavirus signal the end of the little double and sometimes (in Provence) triple peck on the cheek? Will flirting be added to the long and grisly death toll? I would miss that, and not just in France."

Well, as you may recall from last week's column meandering through Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, Number 4 has been ticked off and now, *enfin*, so has 6. *Je suis en France*. And my fears about 20 would appear to have been well-founded.

"*Pas de bise*," said our friend Philippe, hands outstretched as we bumped into him while out walking with his wife Eliane, "*la bise est morte*".

We have been coming to the same part of Provence (see diaries volumes 1-8) for so long that we have a circle of friends and acquaintances wholly separate from our life in the UK. Some are aware that I've been some kind of 'grand fromage' in politics, maybe because we have told them of our past as we got to know them, or because they have seen me pop up on French TV, usually described as "*ancien porte-parole de Tony Blair*". I prefer 'ex-' myself. 'Ancien' is just one *t* short of *ancient*. Others know me as "Monsieur Millar", because Fiona is the one who tends to be out and about in the community more, ordering and buying and organising things. It means, however, we have been students and practitioners of *la bise* for decades.

My first significant experience of France was as an *assistant d'anglais* in a school in Nice in 1977, and I found the initiation into *la vie de la bise* frankly overwhelming. I would arrive at the staff room reasonably early, and have maybe half a dozen sets of cheeks against which delicately to brush; but then as others came in, they too would have to *faire la tour de la salle*, so up and down we got from our chairs to greet the late arrivals, and as I imagined this going on in every workplace in France, my hard-headed Anglo-Saxon mind was wondering just how many hours were lost annually to this form of greeting, and how much less productive was the French economy as a result?

The sociology of *la bise* was a specialist subject in itself. With people who lived in the same apartment block, when was it time to graduate from nod of the head to shake of the hand to *la bise*? For how long did you have to be a regular at a bar or restaurant before the barman, barmaid or *maitre d'* would think it appropriate for a *bise* greeting? Who made the first



'La bise est morte'

Covid has killed off the French art of kissing

move? What happened if you made that move, but the other person thought you were going too quickly? And was there a sexual element to this? I got the sense that I was expected to graduate to *la bise* with a woman far more quickly than with a man, but perhaps that was just my Scottish/North England upbringing kicking in, kissing men not having been a big part of it.

The school was a bloody minefield. I was barely 20, and some of the girls I taught were just a couple of years younger than I was. So I might bump into them in a bar, or on the beach, and we would *bise* away. But in school? I never really knew what the rules were, and I worried what the head would think of me if I asked: "Am I allowed to kiss the girls?"

Nice was complicated by its proximity to Italy, and the influence thereof. The Italian equivalent of *La Bise* is *Il Bacio*, but that is very much a lip to cheek thing, much more of a kissing action and sound, whereas *La Bise* is essentially a slight grazing of cheeks.

Despite these decades of experience, occasional embarrassments still arise. I might see the baker, the postwoman, the guy in the cafe, or the woman in the paper-shop, every day for weeks. We might talk, about politics, family, sport, what to do, where to go... but where is the science or guidebook that says after x days, y weeks, z months or years, it's *la bise* time? Because once that first *bise* is

done, (pre-Covid at least,) you will never shake that person's hand again.

Also, as with whether it is two kisses or three, which cheek to go for first may vary region to region. And though you don't actually kiss the other person's cheek, you should make a kissing sound with your lips. Do not, repeat not, go "mwah, mwah". *Faux pas social affreux!* You might as well fart or shout "*J'aime le Brexit*".

Kissing as a form of greeting dates at least as far back as the Romans. Their kissing broke down into three separate groupings... *saevium* (romance/love); *osculum* (kisses of friendship or religious ritual) and *basium* (greeting). It is from the word *basium* that both *la bise* and *baiser* are derived, the latter meaning both 'to kiss', and also 'to f**k'. See what I mean about how this would have been complicated had I raised it with the headteacher: "*Je peux baiser les filles, ou pas?*"

The point of the cheek to cheek greeting was to show equality between those who are doing *la bise*, a mutual act of respect between two people on the same level. Though far from mandatory, it was fairly common in France by the time of the Middle Ages, but guess what stopped it? The Black Death, the worst pandemic in all human history, which killed tens of millions between 1346 and 1351.

But as a kind of normality resumed after the plague was conquered, so *la bise*

made a slow, steady return, with two important milestones attached to two of the most significant moments in France's history later re-cementing it into French life. First, the French Revolution of 1789, and the rediscovery of *la bise* as a symbol of *égalité* and *fraternité* in particular. Second, after the First World War, it took another giant leap forward among the masses, in part as a way of rejecting, and distinguishing from, those *de haut en bas* types in high society with their condescending kisses of the hand. And in Britain, as we have become more European, despite the blip of Brexit, the double cheek embrace has developed into a much more popular form of greeting.

So for now, *la bise est morte*, but history suggests it can come back from the dead. I hope so. Humans need physical contact with each other, added to which I quite enjoy the sociology mentioned above.

Also, there is great history in the handshake – it is a peace symbol, a way of showing you carry no weapons – and such rich history in *la bise* too.

I don't know, but I cannot imagine that if there is another pandemic a few centuries from now, historians will look back at the Covid pandemic of 2020 and say "this was the period in which elbow-bumping, the so-called *bosse du coude*, became the traditional form of greeting around the world, which has endured to this day". God, I hope not.

À mort la bosse du coude. Vive la poignée de main. Et surtout ... Vive la bise.

ODD TIMES: Two men pose as they greet each other with their feet in Marseille

Photo: Getty Images

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site

AVXLIVE:ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

AGENDA



The pandemic has been a shared national experience. Throughout it, DR JEN GASKELL and her team have been monitoring the public's assessment through a series of focus groups. She explains how different narratives are emerging



There have been calls for a public inquiry into what went wrong, and what went right, in the UK's response to the coronavirus pandemic. The PM has finally promised such an independent investigation, while making it clear it would be a matter for well into the future.

The problem for the government is that the public's inquiry into its Covid-19 performance is already under way and heading towards its own conclusions.

The pandemic – with its lockdowns, furloughing, clapping for the NHS, government briefings, wall-to-wall media coverage, social and economic disruption and those we lost too soon – is a genuinely shared experience.

This makes it open to immediate public assessment and judgement, unlike other more focused objectives of formal investigation and judgement such as the

SHARED STORY:

1 NHS staff and members of the public take part in Clap for Our Carers

2 Funeral directors wearing mask and gloves transport the coffin of care worker Janet Livingston, 60, who died of Covid-19 in Montrose

3 The slogan "Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Save Lives" on the BT tower

4 Dominic Cummings delivers his infamous statement after being accused of breaking lockdown rules

5 Boris Johnson
Photos: Getty Images

Iraq War, Grenfell, child protection, and NHS treatment failures, for example.

We have been running focus groups in towns and cities across England (London, Bristol, Blackpool, Bolton and Oldham) between May and July. The original focus of our study was on how people make judgements about trust and how this differed between Leavers and Remainers.

The shutdown led us to move the groups online and to explore questions of political trust in the context of the pandemic – a topic that inevitably was raised by our participants in conversations, even before they were prompted.

The public's judgement is being formed, our focus groups suggest, through the identification of narrative moments. In their retelling and sharing, these moments are framing an assessment of the government's performance that has a different quality to that of a forensic, formal public inquiry.

This judgement is not based on establishing a timeline, cross-examining witnesses, collecting vast numbers of documents or checking email trails. Rather, as the immediacy of the experience of pandemic fades, public opinion concentrates attention on a series of events and cements opinions into a shared account.

Like the family Christmas experience where familiar stories are repeated, the history of Covid-19 is being developed as shared narratives through the retelling of a series of key events.

What is emerging in the public's narrative of Covid-19? There are at least

four storylines. The first is that the pandemic was an unprecedented event and no one really knew how best to respond to it.

At this point people generally express trust in government to handle the crisis as a matter of faith. This is best illustrated by the following remark, although it was expressed in almost every group in some way:

'I've got to trust them like you've got to trust the doctor: He gives you something you've got to trust that tablet. You've got to trust the expert.' (Sophia, Group 1, London May 27, 2020)

Despite pandemics having long been identified as a global threat and the existence of official preparedness plans, most people empathised with the difficulty of the task facing the government in its response to the crisis:

'I'm not a massive fan of Boris Johnson, never have been. But I wouldn't want his job for all the tea in China at the moment I'm afraid.' (Ivy, Group 1, London, May 27)

The general consensus is that, if a little slowly at first, the government acted to deal with the crisis in a way that brought people together:

'I think there's a strong sense of community and togetherness for the country. We're all in this together.' (Noah, Group 1, London, May 27)

Some aspects of the government's handling of Covid-19 receive support – such as the use of experts and in particular the furlough scheme:

'At the beginning of this there was no book that Boris had telling him what to do. He was reliant on his decisions, his scientists, everyone around him. So we've

just got to trust what he's doing. And I completely trust them. And he's got the best people around him.' (Charlotte, Group 1, London, May 27)

'I think the financial support has been fantastic. There've been loans, there've been grants for business rates, and obviously, the furlough scheme.' (David, Group 2b, London, June 18)

The next storylines are not so positive for the government. For aspects of the government's response that are viewed more critically, such as the perceived delay in locking down, PPE shortages or failures in safeguarding care homes, there is generally a strong sense that those errors are made worse by attempts to diminish responsibility or mislead the public about what went wrong.

The idea that owning up to mistakes is a prerequisite for trusting the government was raised in almost every group:

'If you've messed up, tell us you've messed up you know, and why, and tell us what you're going to do about it, don't hide it from us. We're big boys and girls now, we can handle it.' (Ivy, Group 1, London, May 27)

Another strong narrative formed around moments of perceived ineptitude, exemplified by the PM's first speech moving towards an easing of lockdown on May 10.

This was frequently recalled by participants as a comic moment when faith in the idea that government had control of the crisis began to fade, with people quoting versions of the speech rather like their favourite parts of comedy sketches.



AGENDA

l of Rest



Indeed, at times the viral Matt Lucas imitation of the PM ("So we are saying don't go to work, go to work, don't take public transport go to work, don't go to work") seems to have merged with memories of the actual speech.

Asked whether they trusted information from the government about the pandemic, one of our two Bristol groups expressed a mixture of confusion and amusement:

Willow: I think the information is completely bonkers, really. You know, stay at home, stay alert at home, I mean, that was a classic, or go to work, but don't leave your home unless you can, and if you can, don't take public transport but there is public transport. I was confused.

Ruby: There have been so many, like, updates, you just, kind of, get a bit lost with what you're supposed to be doing now, don't you? I know I do.

Willow: I mean, who came up with 'stay alert at home' is just, it makes no sense. Stay home. One thing.

Joshua: Your eyes are wide open. I'm alert now. (Group 4, Bristol, June 23)

Another repeated narrative is the breakdown in trust created by the controversy over the Dominic Cummings' trips to Durham and Barnard Castle. In the groups held shortly after the revelations, this received surprisingly little discussion and there was a fair degree of understanding of the circumstances.

As time has passed, this has given way to a story that this is the point when everyone took it as a signal that Covid-19 was now a free-for-all:

I feel like the decisions are really shaky,

and I feel like once that guy started going off to see his family... I think at first it was everybody together, the decisions, everyone was gung ho on it... and then I feel like when they started doing what they wanted, just showing to the masses 'you've all got to do this but we're going to dance to the beat of our own drums because we're different', I think that's when it went.' (Georgia, Group 7, Oldham, July 16)

The moral authority of the government was lost not by the event itself, but by the retelling of the story and reflections on its implications. Since June, it has come up unprompted in every group when people were asked what issues the current government was most and least trustworthy on:

'Least trustworthy on NHS, education, social services, care, that sort of thing. And also I question the morals, especially Dominic Cummings.' (Sienna, Group 4, Bristol, June 23)

A final narrative is that of fear of betrayal. The core argument is that politicians proudly declare their support for care workers and clap NHS staff for show, but in practice will let them down – perhaps something that will be addressed by the recent above-inflation pay rise for a number of key workers.

'I'm really, really hoping that Boris will do something about the nurses' pay and all the rest of it at the end of this. But I don't trust them to do that. I don't think that's going to happen.' (Sophia, Group 1, London, May 27)

'I think the least trustworthy is again, like a lot of other people have said about the NHS... And the reasons being... you're



looking at somebody who's been outside clapping every Thursday for the NHS and yet has also just stopped student nurses from getting paid. They've stopped that grant going through to student nurses, which I think is abhorrent, to be honest.' (Alfie, Group 4, Bristol, June 23)

One could argue that the government should hold an inquiry sooner rather than later, if it wants to influence the public's judgement, which is already well on its way to delivering a verdict.

The narratives outlined here may become enduring folk wisdom about the government's handling of Covid-19 and soon be joined by other critical storylines as the economic fallout of the pandemic comes into focus, especially if the impact is felt most severely in so-called left behind areas.

What does all this imply for the public's overall assessment of how the government has handled Covid-19? As it stands, the overarching judgement of the government's performance is delicately balanced.

Dealing with an event seen as unprecedented gets you some breathing space. Not owning your mistakes, giving mixed messages, having double standards and lauding key workers for short-term political advantage costs public trust.

■ The team involved in this research also included professor Gerry Stoker, professor Will Jennings and Dr Dan Devine, all from the University of Southampton; the study was supported by funding from UK in a Changing Europe, which originally published this article. All participants' names have been pseudonymised

Euronews:

LA SCALA TO REOPEN WITH REQUIEM IN COVID-HIT REGION

Milan's famed La Scala opera house has announced a programme of concerts and ballets aimed as a signal of confidence that European cultural life can resume in full following the coronavirus lockdowns, and in support of artists who were left out of work during the shutdowns. La Scala's musical director, Riccardo Chailly, will launch the season on September 4 by conducting Verdi's *Requiem* in Milan's Duomo dedicated to victims of the coronavirus, followed by dates in Bergamo and Brescia, in solidarity with two of the hardest-hit provinces in the Lombardy region that has accounted for nearly half of Italy's dead and nearly 40% of all confirmed infections.

The September 4 concert will also be broadcast in churches throughout the region.

The theatre itself will reopen on September 12 with a performance reserved for health care workers of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, with its optimistic *Ode To Joy* movement.

FRENCH CAR GIANT MAKES PROFIT DESPITE SALES SLIDE

The maker of Peugeot and Citroen cars, PSA Group, has said it made a profit in the first six months of the year even as the coronavirus pandemic caused a deep drop in sales. The French company, which is in the process of merging with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, said its first-half profits fell to 595 million euro (£541 million) from 1.83 billion euro a year earlier as sales dropped by 35%, to 25.1 billion euro. Sales rebounded in July as showrooms reopened from the pandemic lockdown in many countries and PSA said it still expects to report a profit over the period from 2019 to 2021, with an adjusted operating margin of over 4.5%.

BELGIUM BRINGS IN NEW RULES TO AVOID A SECOND LOCKDOWN

Belgium has put the brakes on its coronavirus exit plan, unveiling a set of drastic social distancing measures aimed at avoiding a new general lockdown amid a surge of Covid-19 infections.

From next Wednesday contacts outside every household will be limited to the same five people over the next four weeks, as the so-called "social bubble" now applies to a house and its occupants and not to individuals. Belgian residents are currently allowed to meet 15 different people per week. The measures do not apply to children under the age of 12. The new measures also include lowering crowd limits at public events to 100 people indoors and 200 people outdoors.

After a sharp decline in infections, Belgium has had a surge over the past three weeks.

KOSOVO ASKS APPLE TO CHANGE MAP TO SHOW ITS BORDERS

Kosovo's foreign minister said she has asked Apple to correct her country's borders in its maps. Meliza Haradinaj has written to the company's chief executive Tim Cook "to take immediate steps to correctly present Kosovo's internationally recognised borders in its AppleMap Service". On those maps, Kosovo is shown as part of Serbia, something the minister said was in "in direct contradiction of the political and legal realities". Kosovo seceded from Serbia after a 1998-99 war that ended with a 78-day Nato air campaign against Serbian troops. It declared independence in 2008, a move recognised by some 100 countries, but not by Serbia.

AGENDA

Anti-Auntie: Leavers on attack over BBC funding

If you liked Brexit, you're going to love its sequels. Pre-production work on one of them began in mid-July on what its organisers describe as "one of the busiest roads in London", when a billboard went up featuring a smug-looking Gary Lineker, a surprised-looking Emily Maitlis, their respective pay packets and the simple message: "Are you still paying?" Below was a tagline carrying the point of the exercise: "Defund the BBC".

This anti-Auntie campaign is ostensibly the creation of Glasgow University history student James Yucel, and ostensibly it aims "to decriminalise non-payment and reduce the scope of the licence fee so that it only covers BBC content". Will the Defunders be happy achieving just those two outcomes though? For as they are well aware, the more you remove the BBC's means of raising revenue, the less able the BBC is to produce content. And in this case, the Defunders hope it will be the kind of content they don't like, created by people whose political views they oppose.

It's no surprise to see Lineker, who vociferously supported Remain, on the billboards. Nor is it a surprise to see the Defunders targeting Maitlis, who missed an episode of *Newsnight* in May following her monologue criticising the government's handling over Dominic Cummings' revolutionary optometry experiment in Barnard Castle. In a YouTube video launching his campaign, Yucel protested that, "Ultimately the BBC is not impartial, they regularly fail to introduce guests with their political background, they accidentally edit footage that makes the government look worse than they actually are, and yeah, I think the people have had enough really."

Steve Anglesey



So who are Yucel's colleagues in the Defund The BBC campaign? The press officer is Liam Deacon, who worked in the same capacity on the Brexit Party's 2019 general election campaign (slogan: "run away, run away") and before that worked at alt-right website *Breitbart London*, where in the 14 months before the referendum he published 450 stories about immigration, migrants or Islam.

Campaign champions include Darren Grimes, whose interview with David "so many damn blacks" Starkey will no doubt be held up as an example of the kind of journalism a defunded BBC could produce if only it dared. Another content champion is Calvin Robinson, who recently told *Spike* that: "Anything that doesn't fit the liberal, metropolitan perspective of the BBC is disregarded... The BBC seems to have become an outlet for woke propaganda." His examples of shows which offer this diet of leftist tripe included *Doctor Who* and *Countryfile*.

Robinson, a teacher, felt similar about the education system in 2016, when after the referendum he professed to be "not at all surprised that the majority of young people voted in line with a left wing agenda to remain in the undemocratic, or even anti-democratic European Union... Schools have been grooming children towards this decision for years."

Strange how it all comes back to Brexit, isn't it? The candidates, the press officer, the campaigner. Even Defund The



BBC's campaign co-ordinator Rebecca Ryan is a veteran of Stand Up 4 Brexit, the unsuccessful quest to find a pro-Leave comedian able to draw more laughs than Mark Francois can just from standing there being Mark Francois.

So is Defund The BBC just a revenge strike on behalf of what they see as pro-Remain bias before and after the referendum? "The Defund the BBC campaign is not connected with Brexit, the 2016 voting preferences of the team are therefore irrelevant," a spokesperson told us. They're concerned instead, they say, with the fact "one in 10 court cases in the UK concerns non-payment of the TV licence fee, and 70% of those prosecuted are women. It disproportionately affects the poor in our society."

They add that the key driver for the campaign is not post-Brexit rage but that: "The BBC is reneging on its commitment to fund free TV licences for the over-75s, which comes into force from August 1. What better time to focus on this issue?" Given that it was the

government that decided to stop paying the BBC to fund this, effectively forcing their hand, it's a rotten line of attack. But it's working – so far Defund The BBC has raised just under £45,000 in just under a month, with an aim to get to £100,000 and produce more billboards "across the country – soon".

Does all this mean James, Darren, Liam and pals are dodging the detector vans? The spokesperson said: "It would be unusual to work on a campaign focused on an organisation and yet not view and monitor its output. The BBC requires a licence fee to watch its output, therefore the entire team have paid for their TV licences for work purposes."

But if they are successful, perhaps there will be no need to pay for much longer – and if arts programmes should be cut and the World Service closed, what's all that against *Doctor Who* no longer being woke?

■ If you really do want to defund the BBC, their website is at www.defundbbc.uk

REVENGE MISSION: Defund The BBC posters could soon be commonplace

STEVE'S SELECTION

CHARLES MOORE

The veteran *Daily Telegraph* columnist has finally come up with something as ludicrous as his April 2016 pronouncement that: "You often hear of people being 'trapped in poverty', but it is also possible to be trapped in wealth. This is David Cameron's fate." Moore says persuading the public to follow Boris Johnson's advice on obesity will be difficult because too many "NHS nurses and ancillary staff... are often disproportionately tubby". The evidence? He'd recently "emerged from a cafe to find my way virtually blocked by an enormously wide, youngish woman in a nurse's uniform. It was a vivid reminder of a general fact about the National Health Service: many of its staff are fat". So, should we discount everything the *Daily Telegraph* tells us about Brexit because some of their staff are disproportionately daft?

MARK FRANCOIS

The mayor of Westminster's Fraggie Rock – sorry, make that "chairman of the respected European Research Group" – has demonstrated that the extent of his European Research appears to be watching old episodes of *'Allo 'Allo!*. During a typically intelligent interview about how Johnny Foreigner would eventually bow down to Bulldog Britain in the trade talks, Francois mocked EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier, by adopting a Rene Artois accent to drawl: "As Michel Barnier says, 'Ze clock is ticking'." It's another triumph of jingoism for the man who said of relations with Berlin last year: "My father was a D-Day veteran, he never submitted to bullying by any German. Neither will his son."

GERARD BATTEN

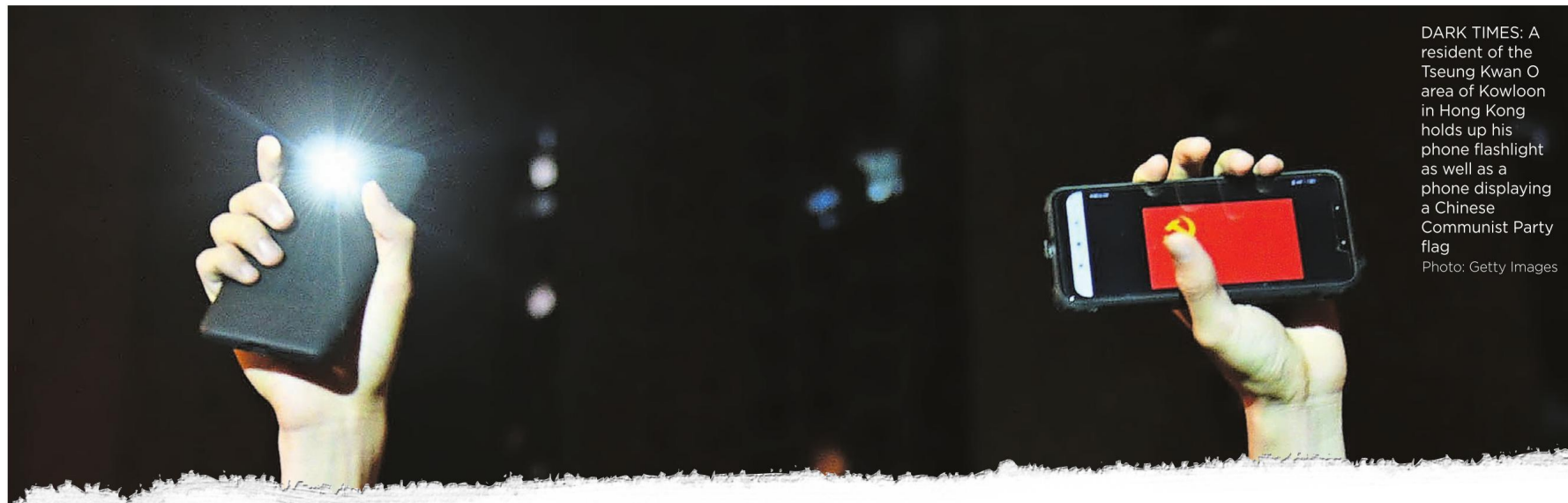
UKIP's greatest-ever leader (inherited 268 councillors and 24 MEPs in 2018; left a year later with 34 councillors and 0 MEPs) continues to show his usual sound judgement even in retirement. Batty Batten is, naturally, both an anti-masker (he says masks are just a piece of cloth "in the way a yellow star was just a lapel badge") and an anti-vaxxer, asking his followers, "Whether you think (Bill) Gates is a Satanist or not, do you want your DNA altered by a vaccine he has cooked up? Such characters are the modern equivalent of Dr Mengele." A sound grasp of the horrors of Nazism there from the man who thought that bringing into UKIP the bloke who was fined for training his dog to do the Heil Hitler salute would be electoral gold.

TOMMY ROBINSON

The far-right activist and Brexiteer, pictured, says he is "looking to relocate my family" to Spain after an alleged arson attack on property belonging to his wife. Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, is already in the country on holiday but says he wants to stay permanently and has found schools for his daughters. In March last year Yaxley-Lennon led a "Make Brexit Happen" march to support the end of free movement and in 2015 said of asylum seekers: "They are destroying people's lives. They are going to drive people to far-right groups. The solution is to stop them invading our country." He added that rather than fleeing abroad, refugees should be kept in camps in their own "safe" countries instead.



EXPERTISE



DARK TIMES: A resident of the Tseung Kwan O area of Kowloon in Hong Kong holds up his phone flashlight as well as a phone displaying a Chinese Communist Party flag
Photo: Getty Images

THE DISAPPEARED



In the earliest days of the Covid outbreak, the Chinese government was on the back foot and its critics spoke up. Within weeks, though, those critics had been removed from the streets. **GILES WHITTELL** describes Xi Jinping's chilling clampdown



When Xu Zhiyong went on the run last year he must have known it wasn't going to be easy. It was December 26. He was on a train heading for Beijing, and in that city alone the Public Security Bureau – China's police and secret police rolled into one – commands the services of 850,000 informants. It has access to a social credit system that tracks and controls Chinese citizens through their smartphones. And it can pick out individuals in huge crowds with

a network of 200 million surveillance cameras hooked up to software that identifies people by their faces and, failing that, the way they walk.

On the train, Xu received a text. It said that four people he had recently invited to a weekend get-together in the coastal city of Xiamen had been arrested. All were human rights lawyers or activists (Xu is both), as well as being known

EXPERTISE

From page 21

critics of the Chinese Communist Party.

Xu immediately switched off his phone. He got off the train at the next station and boarded another in the opposite direction, heading south for Guangzhou. For the next 50 days he kept moving, staying with friends and communicating only by email.

He kept busy by writing. On February 4 this year, he released an 8,000-word open letter to Xi Jinping, taunting the Chinese president for a lack of vision compared with his predecessors and accusing him of “shambolic” leadership during the coronavirus crisis. “You have proved that you lack the most rudimentary competences, yet you remain perversely unaware of your limitations,” he wrote. “That’s made all the worse by a system that censors discordant views and leaves room only for fawning approval.” He ended by calling on Xi to resign. His last blog post – now scrubbed from the web – was dated February 14. The police caught up with him the next day and he hasn’t been seen or heard from since.

“Xu is my close friend,” says Teng Biao, a fellow human rights lawyer, now based in New York. “He knew he couldn’t hide forever, so he used that time to call for international attention not only to himself but to the situation for other activists.”

That situation is dangerous even by China’s standards; and even though the regime seemed briefly to have relaxed. Early in the outbreak there was a spike in candid reporting as the coronavirus filled Wuhan’s hospitals and morgues. China *Newsweek* ran stories about official negligence and delay. Medics and citizen journalists followed the lead of Dr Li Wenliang, the ophthalmologist who first alerted colleagues to what looked like a new Sars-like virus. When news of Li’s death broke on February 7, two million people shared the hashtag #Iwantfreedomofspeech in the space of eight hours.

“The Communist Party and its information control were temporarily thrown off their game by the spread of the virus and the realisation that they were at fault,” says Steven Butler of the Committee to Protect Journalists. China watchers wondered if the outbreak could even become Xi’s Chernobyl; a catalyst for a catastrophic loss of faith in the regime.

But China in 2020 bears almost no resemblance to the Soviet Union in 1986. Its economy is strong despite the pandemic, and despite western efforts to hobble tech giants like Huawei. Its security apparatus is rocket-fuelled by artificial intelligence. Its global image – tarnished by campaigns of repression in Hong Kong and Xinjiang – is of a formidably ambitious superpower.

The party may have stumbled at first on information control, but it’s back in charge now, with a vengeance. Its strategy – to intimidate would-be critics into silence, fill the airwaves with a curated narrative of China as hero and seize on the pandemic to take a bold new step towards the dream of a dissent-free society – may well be working.



As 2019 ticked over into 2020, Fang Bin was a clothing salesman who liked to do some vlogging on the side. He lived in



- CONTROL:
- 1 A police officer walks past placards of detained rights activists taped on the fence of the Chinese liaison office in Hong Kong
 - 2 People wait as medical staff work at Wuhan Red Cross Hospital
 - 3 Chen Qiushi
 - 4 Li Zehua
 - 5 A pro-democracy activist holds a placard of missing citizen journalist Fang Bin
 - 6 Surveillance cameras monitor tourists in Tiananmen Square in Beijing

Photos: Getty Images

Wuhan and posted occasional enthusiastic clips about his city’s rag trade; then something about the outbreak and Dr Li’s deteriorating condition stirred his conscience. He started visiting local hospitals and medical supply stores to see how reality compared with what official media was saying.

Unschooling in reporting, he mixed amiable commentary with sometimes shocking reportage. On February 1, a Saturday, he filmed himself taking a walk round his neighbourhood in an eastern suburb. (“This is where I live. No one is walking outside, [but] the birds are still flying.”) He proceeded to Wuhan’s central hospital, where no one stopped him wandering into wards or along corridors crowded with gurneys. He filmed patients clinging to life, and relatives sitting with loved-ones who had already died. On the way in, he counted three bodies in yellow bags in a van from the Wuchang Funeral Parlour. On the way out, he counted eight.

Fang posted rough edits online and quickly earned a following. On February 7 he filmed himself at home, struggling to hold back tears as he spoke of Dr Li’s death. He said his WeChat account had been suspended and admitted friends were worried about him.

Two days later he wrote a final message to his viewers in bold black calligraphy – “All citizens resist. Hand power back to the people!” – and filmed through a crack in his front door as the police arrived. At first they pretended to be concerned for his health in view of his hospital visits. When he refused to let them in they had the fire brigade break down the door. That was February 9. There’s been no official word on Fang Bin since.

Three days earlier another self-taught journalist had gone missing in similar circumstances. Chen Qiushi isn’t from Wuhan, but he went there as others streamed out. By his own account he got the last train in before the city was locked down on January 23. He started filming at once, outside Hankou station and a short walk from the Huanan Seafood Market to which many of the earliest Covid-19 infections were traced. “Why did I come here?” he asks, talking to his phone on a selfie stick. “I’ll be blunt. My responsibility as a citizen journalist. What kind of journalist are you if disaster strikes and you don’t rush to the front line?”

What might seem self-regarding comes across as endearing. Take a look. Chen, who is 34 and a lawyer by training, is psyching himself up.

He is also – and this is what bothered the authorities – talking to as many as 1.5 million followers on social media. He collected them over the course of 2019 by reporting honestly and energetically on floods in Ganzhou and the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. He showed viewers that the protests were mainly peaceful, not the “riots” described in Chinese state media. In the process, he ensured he’d be followed wherever he went after that, digitally if not in person.

At first Chen enjoyed remarkable freedom in Wuhan, filming all over the city and talking into his phone in the evenings in his hotel room. He recorded images of nurses forced to work without PPE, quite unlike the state-sanctioned footage of fully-equipped medics broadcast on TV and round the world. He toured a convention centre converted into a field hospital and found “long rows of people” without access to testing, diagnostics or doctors. In one surreal sequence he spoke to a woman who had one arm round her dead father while trying to reach someone on her phone to help remove his body.

EXPERTISE



After a week, the police were calling and the pressure was getting to him. He was afraid and yet not afraid, he says in a clip recorded at the end of January. “In front of me is the virus and behind me is the legal and administrative power of China... [but] I’m not even afraid of death. You think I’m afraid of the Communist Party?” Choking up, he reaches for the off button.



China jails more journalists than any other country. The Committee to Protect Journalists officially lists and champions 48 currently imprisoned for doing their jobs, which may seem a low number in a population of 1.4 billion, but that’s the point. As Steven Butler of the CPJ notes, “you don’t have to disappear or arrest many to intimidate the rest”. Besides, there are more acknowledged victims of suppression.

By mid-February police were publicising the fact that they had penalised more than 5,000 people for “disseminating false and harmful information” about the virus. The message: sharing anything unofficial about Covid means risking arrest. Not all these cases have led to prison,

but Chinese Human Rights Defenders, a California-based advocacy group, keeps track of the more serious ones. Between January 1 and March 26 it counted 897.



For everyone named in these cases the pandemic has been a personal crisis – perhaps the first since Tiananmen Square – in which they have put fear to one side and taken a stand. For the regime, what started as a disaster with the potential for national humiliation has morphed into an opportunity. Xi hasn’t let it go to waste.

In January, soon after claiming to have taken personal control of China’s coronavirus response, the president told officials to “strengthen the guidance of public opinion”. They did not need telling twice. As soon as the virus was under control domestically, Chinese doctors and crates of PPE began showing up in Europe to illustrate the new story of China to the rescue. It has not gone over well in Washington, but the presidents of Italy, Serbia and the EU have thanked China effusively for its support.

Internally, Butler says China is back to the status quo in terms of information control – back to “a steady trend since the

Beijing Olympics of step by step suppression”. That trend started picking up speed in 2015. On July 9 that year more than 200 lawyers and human rights activists across China were rounded up without warning. Many were exiled, disappeared without explanation or put on trial on charges of subverting state power and jailed for long terms. The date gave rise to the name of the purge – the 709 crackdown. Why then? There seems to be no good reason, which itself reveals much about how Xi’s security state works. “The regime has a checklist of things that have to be done,” says Minxin Pei, a Chinese political scientist now at Claremont McKenna College in California. “Xi gives general instructions and the specifics are drawn up by others. In essence, he scribbles in the margins of briefing documents and his underlings interpret.” So the timing was not that significant – except in one respect. “Xi wanted to build political momentum towards the 2017 Communist Party Congress, when he prevented the designation of his successor.” This was the moment when Xi, like Vladimir Putin last month in Moscow, confirmed for anyone still in

doubt that he intended to remain president for life.



As a full-blown authoritarian, Xi attaches huge importance to information control. In an often-quoted 2016 speech to ranks of deferential state media staff, he reminded them of their duty to “strictly adhere to the party’s leadership... speak for the party’s will and its propositions, and protect the party’s authority and unity”. This year, that authority cracked under the strain of Covid-19. “Xi lost control for about two weeks,” Pei says. “When he got the first reports of the outbreak in early January he either made the mistake of taking local party officials at face value – they have since been shown to have hidden the spread of the virus in Wuhan – “or he panicked”. If panic had taken hold the history of the pandemic might have been very different, but by February 10, Pei says, Xi had reasserted control “and started firing people”.



A third well-known figure who felt this reassertion of control was Li Zehua. Young, good-looking and well-placed in the ziggurat of state TV, he had much to gain from toeing the official line. Instead he went rogue. He quit China Central Television early in the pandemic and rebranded himself as Kcriss – rapper, YouTuber and citizen journalist. On or around February 11, Kcriss sneaked through the Wuhan cordon in search of Chen Qiushi, whose disappearance was by then a big story in the riskier reaches of social media. He never found Chen, but he did find fame in a car chase that he filmed on his phone as he fled police who tried to stop him in the middle of Wuhan. He was detained later that day (February 26), put in “quarantine” for a month despite showing no symptoms of Covid, and released to his family. A month after that, chastened and stilted, he reappeared online in a clip that bears all the hallmarks of a coerced confession. “For me, everything has been a little bit different these months,” he begins. He describes the chase, the scrupulous care taken by police to respect his rights and keep him safe, and his own “countless, chaotic thoughts”. He ends with a plea to “uphold the doctrine of the golden mean of Confucian orthodoxy”.



So there are ways to ‘reappear’, but it may be that you have to cooperate to take advantage of them. Some of Chen Qiushi’s supporters think he remains incommunicado because he’s refusing to record this sort of confession. Others fear for Chen’s life. China’s apparatus of suppression is so huge that outcomes can be hard to predict when it sucks people in. In addition to the Public Security Bureau and its always-on electronic surveillance machine, Chinese taxpayers fund separate bureaus responsible for propaganda and censorship; a full-service cadre of professional spies in the State Security Bureau; a parallel universe of military

EXPERTISE

► From page 23

intelligence. In addition, Minxin Pei lists five layers of informants plying the organs of state with information on every aspect of its citizens' lives, from casual remarks in a university seminar room in Beijing to a Uighur's choice of food in a market in Urumchi. These layers comprise a system of 'defence in depth' around a core of regular police. The inner layer consists of paid informants, often ex-criminals, who are supposed to be personally recruited by police, two informants per officer.

Outer layers include volunteer workplace snitches, Crimewatch-style neighbourhood patrols and party members for whom informing on fellow citizens is supposed to be the most natural thing in the world.

And then there are the Xie Jing – police "contractors" or auxiliaries, Teng Biao explains, who are retained by local forces to do their dirty work and can be impossible to spot until they target you.

Teng tells the story of someone who fell foul of them, the brother of a fellow exile. "His name was Chen Hejian and he lived in Wuhan. One day during lockdown he got fed up with being inside, so he left his apartment to meet a friend for drinks. He didn't tell anyone what he was doing, and on his way home he was caught by Xie Jing guards and beaten to death."

This is the street-level reality of Xi's dream of total conformity, and it's not the same as his predecessor Hu Jintao's dream of a "harmonious society". That gave way to something altogether more absolutist when Xi took control of the politburo eight years ago.

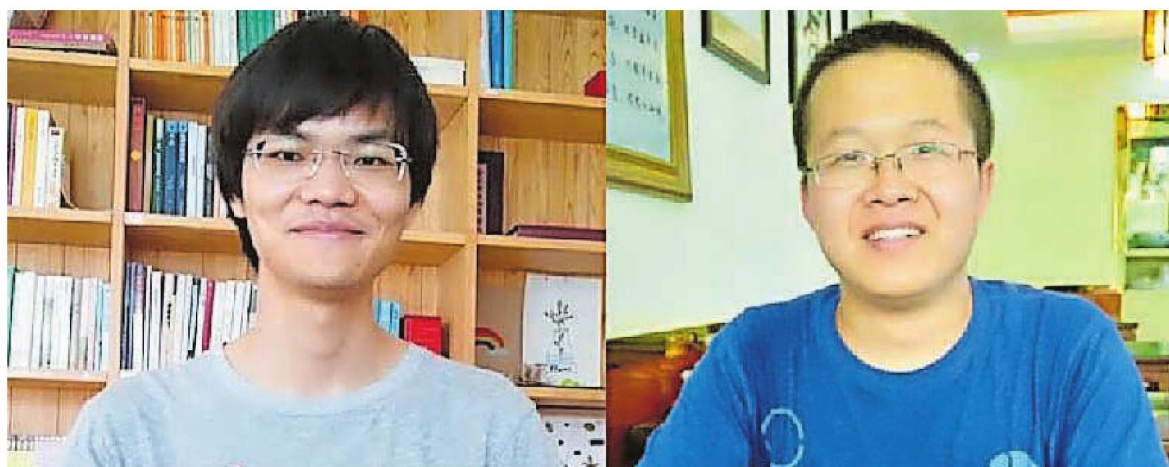
"It's even more serious than the fact of police contractors beating people to death," Teng says. "It's the fact that ordinary citizens have implicitly been given the power to detain and torture people, and that's what reminds us of the Cultural Revolution." Teng has felt the hard edge of the Chinese state. He's been tortured physically and psychologically for his activism during 70 days in extreme solitary confinement, but even that was before Xi's rise to power.

"Xi cannot tolerate potential rivals," he says. This may seem obvious in a one-party autocracy, but it highlights a contrast with his predecessor's relatively relaxed control of the politburo – and it echoes Xu Zhiyong's caustic, comedic open letter to Xi; the one that mocks his insecurities and his instinct to fall back on high-tech authoritarianism.

What have Xi's people hidden? What have the truth-tellers found? How have they suffered? What Fang Bin and Chen Qiushi uploaded to the net (until it was taken down) was clear evidence of a system more concerned to contain information than the virus. In two crucial weeks straddling January and February they witnessed a cover-up that delayed the red alert the rest of the world needed to head off disaster. We got the message in the end, but too late to save hundreds of thousands who are now dead or suffering the lingering after-effects of a disease still poorly understood.

Fang, Chen and Xu are being held under what police call "residential surveillance at a designated location". It sounds comfortable, but isn't, and the risks to the Chinese state were they to be released could be too high to contemplate. Wherever they are, they may be there some time.

DETAINED: Cai Wei (left) and Chen Mei (right)
Photos: via Tortoise



CIRCUMVENTING THE CENSORS

YAQIU WANG on the fate of two young idealists who risked everything to beat Chinese censorship



Readers of online materials from sources in China are often frustrated when they click on an interesting article – only to find it has been deleted by government censors. Sometimes only a few minutes elapse after an article is published before it disappears.

Terminus 2049, a crowd-sourced project started in April 2018, sought to change that by archiving materials censored on Chinese media outlets and social media platforms. But after only a year of operation, on April 19, the Beijing police took away the group's founders, Chen Mei and Cai Wei, both 27, from their homes. After detaining them in an undisclosed location for 54 days, authorities formally arrested them on June 12 on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." They are now being held in Beijing's Chaoyang Detention Center.

Authorities rejected the lawyers the families hired for the two men, and instead assigned state lawyers to represent them. "I am very worried that Chen Mei could face unfair trial and imprisonment," Chen Mei's brother Chen Kun told me.

Terminus 2049 – named after a distant planet in a galaxy invented by Isaac

Asimov – was hosted on Github, the world's largest open-source code-sharing and publishing site. The project automatically archived webpages of links that netizens had sent to the site. The articles would be preserved on the site even after they were later blocked. So Terminus 2049 was a

decentralized, crowdsourcing platform in which netizens could participate and preserve the Chinese internet's memory together. Web-users could also visit the site just to read articles that authorities didn't want them to see. Authorities have occasionally tried to block Github, but have never fully done so, perhaps because numerous developers in China rely on it to build software.

Before Chen and Cai's detention, Terminus 2049 had archived more than 600 articles, of which about 100 are on Covid-19. Those articles, including news pieces, interviews, and personal accounts, documented the real-life situation of people in Wuhan during the outbreak, some of which criticised the Chinese government's initial cover-up of the novel coronavirus. The site had also archived censored articles on China's #MeToo movement and its crackdown on labour activists.

Since Chen Mei was taken into custody, Chen Kun has tirelessly campaigned for his release. "When I give media interviews [about my brother], I often feel a sense of absurdity," Chen said. "I have to explain that [China's] internet censorship... has become so severe that they were forcibly disappeared for simply archiving some articles."

Chen Kun is right. Since president Xi Jinping came to power in late 2012, China has significantly tightened information control and ramped up propaganda, to the extent that idealistic young people like Chen and Cai willing to take up a fight against censorship have become rare.

Some Chinese people over 30 have known a Chinese internet that was freer and connected to the global internet. These tend to be the ones who most resent censorship. Some younger people, having grown up without international platforms such as Twitter and Google but only heavily censored Chinese alternatives have not experienced this relative information freedom. And government propaganda has some of the younger generations believing that the Great Firewall, the authorities' extensive censorship system, protects them from false information and the country from social instability.

On the surface, Chen Mei and Cai Wei seemed unlikely rebels. Both are young and from inland provinces that

tend to be less exposed to progressive ideas. Chen Mei, from a middle-class family, has been strongly influenced by his older brother Chen Kun. Chen Kun said that he was lucky that when he was in college the environment on campus and online were relatively free, and that he was able to gain knowledge and perspectives that are different from or contrary to official teaching. Chen Kun, who was detained for 81 days in 2014 for supporting the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, has passed to his younger brother what he called his "passion for open-source technology" and "the belief that a free internet can bring about social change".

Cai Wei was from a poor family in Hubei province. In 2007, when he was in middle school, a volunteer-based grassroots organisation called Liren that provided summer camps and libraries for rural youth set up a library in his school. Liren volunteers – mostly college students from big cities – brought him not only reading materials but also ideas that he would not have learned from school.

Chen and Cai met in 2011 at Liren-organised activities and became friends. Later, both became volunteers for the group. But Beijing had other ideas, cracking down on independent groups. Liren thrived and struggled in spite of growing official hostility, until in 2014 the authorities shut it down. They detained its founder, Li Yingqiang, for eight months in 2019.

Chen and Cai's experiences show the power of ideals, and how one idealist can inspire another. And even in the face of government reprisals, some young activists persist. In June Nick Chen (a pseudonym) started Duty Machine, a project similar to Terminus 2049. "There are 'incorrect' memories we must preserve," Chen told Radio Free Asia. We must fight for our memories." When asked why he named the project Duty Machine, Chen recalled a student participant of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. When a journalist asked the student pedaling his bike why he was heading to Tiananmen Square to protest, the student responded cheerfully: "I think this is my duty."

■ Yaqiu Wang is a researcher at Human Rights Watch

Both these articles were originally published by Tortoise. Tortoise is committed to open, inclusive journalism and helping its members make sense of the world around them. Try it today. Download the Tortoise app and you can get your first 30 days for free

Tortoise.

SOCIAL DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM BREXIT...

SHOW YOUR COLOURS WITH THE BEST REMAINDER MERCHANDISE



REJOIN TSHIRT
£20



48% MUG
£12



REJOIN TOTE
£12



FACE MASKS
£15



TOWELS
£25

THE TOWEL GET 2 FOR £35!

COVID-19: Please note we are continuing to process orders, but allow longer for shipping during this period

ORDER FORM

Post your form to: The New European Shop,
Prospect House, Rouen Road, Norwich, NR1 1RE

PRODUCT	PRICE	SIZE/GENDER	QUANTITY	TOTAL PRICE
Rejoin tshirt	£20			
Proudly one of the 48% mug	£12			
Rejoin tote bag	£12			
EU face mask	£15			
UK/EU face mask	£15			
2 towels for £35	£35	☐ I Love EU ☐ UK/EU towel		
Choice of towel	UK EU			
UK EU beach towel	£25			
I Love EU beach towel	£25			

YOUR DETAILS (mandatory to complete)

Mr/Mrs/Ms	First name
Surname	
Address	
Postcode	
Tel/mobile	
Email	

I enclose a cheque made payable to Archant Community Media Ltd (with your name, address and email address on the back) for the sum of £.....
Offer only available to the UK and Europe. All orders will be acknowledged by letter or email, advising you of the expected despatch date. Offer subject to availability. Your contract for supply of goods is with The New European Shop.

ORDER ONLINE AT [TNESHOP.CO.UK](https://tneshop.co.uk) OR USE COUPON

EXPERTISE

The Grand Duchy is the first country in the world to introduce such a scheme. **EMMA LUCK** asks whether it could be a post-Covid example to follow



If you bought a ticket for the number six bus from the Pletzer stop in the suburb of Helfenterbruck at 11.59pm on February 28 you were probably the last person in Luxembourg to pay for your journey by public transport.

The reason for this was nothing to do with the fast-looming Covid pandemic, but, rather, a quiet revolution that occurred in this central European country the size of Oxfordshire just before the virus struck.

In a world first, fares for public transport throughout the whole nation were scrapped. Thanks to the largesse of the government and taxpayers of the Grand Duchy, all buses, trams and trains are now free of charge for citizens, expatriates and visitors alike.

In a nation with more cars in use per capita than any other country in the European Union, this free mobility drive is aiming to encourage a shift away from reliance on private vehicles.

Only one in five commuters currently use public transport so the government is looking to transform the mindset of its people and get them onto the network that they have thus far shunned.

Nationwide free transport is a key policy of the ruling coalition, which is made up of the centrist Democratic Party, the left wing Socialist Workers' Party and the Greens. Their strategy is intended to combat pollution, support low earners and to reduce congestion especially around Luxembourg City.

Pre-lockdown, the Grand Duchy was thriving economically but had severe issues with traffic. Each driver there spent an average of 30 hours per year stuck in jams. Major roads were snarled up in the rush-hour; buses are old-fashioned and the rail system is notorious for its delays. More than half of Luxembourg's greenhouse gas emissions come from transport.

The government had two options – use a carrot such as offering free travel to incentivise its people to get onto the trains and buses, or adopt the stick approach that London and Paris have, with a congestion charge and a flat ban of certain number plates respectively. The former approach was seen as the more effective.

The ruling coalition is optimistic about its chances of success. Luxembourg is both compact and wealthy. While many locals are comfortably unfamiliar with buses and trains, their taxes can help to solve the problem with overcrowding on the roads. Research suggests that introducing just one more train into the public transport network could take 2,000 cars off the road with the resulting benefits from cutting vehicle emissions whilst an extra 20 trains could get 40,000 cars off the road.

The project will cost an estimated 41 million euros (£35 million) in lost ticket



NO TICKETS PLEASE!

IS LUXEMBOURG'S FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN ONE TO REPLICATE OR AVOID?

EXPERTISE



FREE RIDE:
Tramways are
in Luxembourg
as the country
inaugurated
its free public
transport policy
Photo: Getty
Images

LUXEMBOURG IN THE PANDEMIC

Luxembourg in the pandemic
The country followed a large-scale testing strategy during the pandemic. While the number of people hospitalised for coronavirus was close to zero in June, there was an upswing in cases this week after a gradual lifting of lockdown measures.

The Duchy set this in motion after Covid-19 appeared to be retreating but a potential second wave is being closely monitored. However, the country's death toll of just over 100 remains stable and is comparatively low when compared to other countries.

fares and that will be shouldered by the taxpayer. However the lost fare revenue is a tiny sum compared with the 1 billion euros (£875 million) it costs to run the country's transport system.

The government is in the middle of a major and much needed overhaul of its transport infrastructure with a new strategy intended to create a public transport network that can carry, and cope with, 20% more people by 2025.

The plan aims to cut rush-hour congestion and includes rail network modernisation, better cross-border connections and new train-tram-bus exchange hubs as well as road-related initiatives, paid for through state investment of 2.2 billion euros. This strategy also includes a 'no-emission' objective, with the introduction of an all-electric fleet of buses by 2030.

Before charges were scrapped it was already the cheapest public system in Europe. An all-day ticket cost four euros, less than the fare for the six-minute journey from Victoria to Clapham Junction in London. The current structure of first and second class compartments on the railways will continue. However the charge for first class will stay; it currently stands at a flat rate of three euros.

Passengers commuting from nearby towns and cities outside the country will continue to pay fares but they will be reduced in line with the proportion of the journey in Luxembourg territory.

While broadly welcomed, the move is not without its critics and has met with opposition from several quarters. Transport unions fear it could lead to an increase in vandalism and redundancies but the transport ministry has claimed that nobody will be laid off; staff are expected to be redeployed.

Each working day (pre-lockdown), the country's population of just over 600,000 swelled by some 220,000 employees who commute from Belgium, France and Germany. These border-hopping workers account for almost half of the country's entire workforce.

There are concerns that some may drive just across the border and leave their vehicles in small towns or villages swamping limited parking facilities while they jump on a free bus or train to reach their workplace.

Also, diesel and petrol is cheap compared with EU neighbours, which discourages motorists from switching to less convenient trains even if they are free. This also brings the so-called fuel tourists flooding across the border to fill their tanks which further adds to the congestion.

Luxembourg is not the first EU country to introduce such measures but it is the first to do so across the entire nation. Estonia's capital, Tallinn, unveiled its free public transport in 2013 but only for residents. It has not ruled out extending the scheme to non-residents but is

reluctant to pay the extra 20 million euros it would cost.

The northern French city of Dunkirk also introduced free travel for its locals in 2018 and saw a dramatic increase in bus passengers. It was such a success that it caught the eye of recently re-elected Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo. She has drawn up proposals for free public transport for all, having introduced it for the youth of Paris during her tenure. However it would work out at around 500 euros per household, which is widely seen as too expensive in the current economic climate.

French bus operators are also considering removing 'peppercorn' fares from some bus services. At present passengers can travel around the south of the country from cities such as Nice and Perpignan for a flat fare of just one euro.

Germany and Belgium will be watching this strategy with interest as they too have mooted the idea of free public transport for all in recent years in a bid to cut air pollution.

Replicating such a scheme across a much larger country – in terms of land mass, population and the subsidised cost – would be no small undertaking, however. The UK has free travel for older people, but there is little current political appetite to extend this further.

It has been difficult assess the impact of Luxembourg's strategy, as the country went into lockdown only a few weeks after its introduction. But the pandemic will certainly have raised interest in it. Among the consequences of the Covid-19 lockdowns has been improved air quality and less congestion. As cities try to return to normality, they will want to hang on to those improvements, rather than simply revert to previous levels of traffic and pollution.

In Luxembourg, the use of public transport is gradually starting to creep back up after lockdown. However, it is going to take some time to see a full recovery as health and safety remain a big concern. Operators are currently working hard to convince the public that they will be safe when using buses and trains. The use of digital technology will be key in this battle to win back commuters and travellers. Real-time connected digital systems are helping operators to plan their services and people flow efficiently while keeping health and safety as the top priority. Travellers can also log in to a plethora of new apps to find out how busy services are.

Quite how much of the country's public transport will bounce back – and how many former commuters will continue working from home – remains to be seen. Whether Luxembourg turns out to be an innovator or an outlier when it comes to tackling climate change and congestion in the post-Covid world is just as unclear.

EXPERTISE

RUSSIA'S FRACTIOUS RECKONING WITH ITS GULAG PAST



ANDREA GULLOTTA on how Stalin's labour camps have become a source of such tension in Putin's Russia



Army soldiers digging mass graves to try to show that the state wasn't responsible for the dead. A historian who vehemently disagrees behind bars on charges that many believe are false. Organisations that support him being attacked by an omnipotent power...

It might sound like some movie, but this is Russia in 2020. These are three snapshots of the war currently being fought over how the Gulag is remembered.

The Gulag was the system of Soviet concentration camps (also known as gulags) in which at least 20 million people were kept over more than six decades. More widely, Gulag identifies the different strands of Soviet repression, including the arrest, execution and forced exile of thousands of victims who were never imprisoned in the camps.

These painful memories have always been controversial – and often sabotaged by forces in Russia who would prefer them forgotten. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, they were kept alive by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil associations and a handful of researchers without any support from the Russian state, often relying on grants from abroad. Much of this work was led by a society known as Memorial, headquartered in Moscow.

To mention only a few examples, Memorial painstakingly archived thousands of copies of state documents about the Gulag system that were made

publicly available in the early 1990s after the fall of communism but then gradually restricted.

Meanwhile, the Perm-36 museum, based on a former gulag site near the city of Perm in central Russia, opened in 1995 thanks to a few activists from Memorial who decided to restore the ruins at their own expense.

Two years later, two of Memorial's regional leaders, Irina Flige and Veniamin Iofe, along with amateur historian Yuri Dmitriev, uncovered a mass grave of more than 7,000 victims of Stalinism at Sandormokh in Karelia, western Russia – one of very few graves ever found.

The 2010s have seen a dramatic change. In 2012, the state passed the so-called 'law on foreign agents', a new regime for every Russian NGO receiving funding from abroad and involved in 'political activity'.

They were forced into a register of 'foreign agents', subjected to special

regulations, and heavily fined if found to be in breach. Most NGOs involved in preserving the memory of the Gulag were heavily affected, including Memorial and also the Sakharov Centre, also based in Moscow.

Several media outlets ran a smear campaign against these 'foreign agents', which resulted in attacks and threats against NGOs, researchers and activists.

Memorial has subsequently been fined under the law more than 20 times. At the same time, monuments of Stalin have appeared in every corner of Russia, while the Perm-36 management was dismissed by the authorities in 2014, and the museum was revamped to be less critical of the communist leader.

Yet the Russian government has also begun taking the memory of the Gulag seriously in positive ways. It opened a huge new state-of-the-art Museum of the History of the Gulag in Moscow in 2015. In 2017, president Putin and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow inaugurated a majestic

TRAGIC HISTORY: Prisoners of the Vorkuta Gulag (Vorkutlag) – one of the major Soviet labour camps, 1945

Photo: Getty Images

EXPERTISE



END OF THE GULAG

The Soviets took steps to dismantle the Gulag system almost immediately after Stalin's death in 1953. An amnesty saw millions of prisoners released within days. But, the camps didn't disappear completely. Some were restructured to serve as prisons for criminals, democratic activists and anti-Soviet nationalists during the 1970s and 1980s.

It wasn't until about 1987 that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the grandson of Gulag victims, officially began the process of completely eliminating the camps. Perm-36 – one of the most famous camps – was among the last to close.

In the midst of this, the state-funded Russian Military History Society was allowed to send army soldiers to excavate the mass graves of Sandormokh and exhume some bodies. This sought to prove the dead were not Gulag victims, but Red Army soldiers murdered by the Finnish army – a theory deemed inaccurate by dozens of researchers.

How do we make sense of these contradictory events? The answer seems to be that, after ignoring the NGOs and researchers for two decades, some Russian institutions decided first to attack them, then to 'invade' a space that is difficult to frame as part of a national discourse of pride in Russia's great achievements.

The Gulag is a "tragic period in our history" which "must be remembered" – as Putin himself said during the opening of the wall of sorrow. However, he added: "This does not mean settling scores. We cannot push society to a dangerous line of confrontation yet again. Now, it is important for all of us to build on the values of trust and stability."

It seems those against the broadly positive state narrative of Russian history are enemies of "trust and stability". Dmitriev promotes the idea of "a state for the individual, and not the individual for the state". Memorial has published a list of perpetrators of the Gulag horrors and asked for justice for their victims.

Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, a memory war has been raging in Russia. NGOs, researchers and activists keep working indefatigably to preserve an independent memory of the Gulag. Meanwhile, the state wants to control it. In the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, plaques memorialising the victims of the Katyn massacre of Polish prisoners of war in 1940 have been removed from the city of Tver.

Yet the memory of the Gulag is as active as ever. This is partly thanks to state-funded initiatives. The Museum of the History of the Gulag has promoted dozens of projects, exhibitions and public talks. And thanks to the Dmitriev case, the Gulag has become one of the most pressing topics in Russian culture today.

■ Andrea Gullotta is a lecturer in Russian at the University of Glasgow; this article also appears at theconversation.com

■ Great European Lives, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Pages 46-47

monument to the victims of Soviet repressions, the 'wall of sorrow', while a 'memory fund' devoted to the Gulag was also opened under the auspices of the president.

So the state had finally invested heavily to preserve the memory of the Gulag, yet the relevant NGOs were fighting for survival. Then in December 2016, Yuri Dmitriev, one of the discoverers of Sandormokh, was arrested on allegations of paedophilia.

Many activists and NGOs insisted the charges were false, and several experts argued for Dmitriev's innocence during the trial. He was acquitted in April 2018, but then arrested two months later on similar charges. A few days ago he was convicted and sentenced to three and half years in prison. Given his time already spent in detention, he is expected to be freed within months. Since prosecutors had been seeking a 15-year sentence, the verdict was almost met as a victory by Dmitriev's supporters.

GDP RIP

Our post-pandemic recovery needs growth, but cannot only be measured by GDP, says **ALA'A SHEHABI**



Economies across the world are facing the worst fall in GDP figures since 2008. In the UK, it fell by 10.4% in the first three months of 2020, and a whopping 20.4% in April.

This is scary. But these GDP figures also hide the deep inequalities that our economic system produces. They confuse the growth of markets and prices with prosperity and value. It is assumed that if we make, consume and sell more things, our welfare and life quality improves. Is this true?

Governments still mostly rely on GDP for economic planning and policy. Companies use it to make decisions: who to hire, what to build, how much to borrow. Whatever the economy's recovery looks like – U, a V, W or Nike swoosh – GDP is the main metric that will be tracked and acted on, with enormous implication for our lives.

GDP was itself borne in times of crisis, just after the First World War. Even its inventor, economist Stephen Kuznets, understood its severe limitations. When tasked with finding a way of measuring total national income, he said: "The welfare of a nation can... scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income". Since then, the case against GDP has been made over and over again, particularly after the 2007 crash, which demonstrated that macroeconomic data and models failed to reflect the reality of the economy. So why do we still use it?

Recessions cannot be fully captured by GDP – it understates costs on health, the environment, society, community and trust. The models we use systematically underestimate decreases in wealth and hide widening income disparities that fuel political resentment.

Millions of pounds has gone into research to upgrade these economic models, but they still seem to be failing us. A recent poll showed 80% of people in the UK believe that health and wellbeing should be prioritised over economic growth. Just 12% opted for economic growth over health and wellbeing.

Some are pushing to get rid of GDP altogether. What is certain is that the crises we face today in health, climate and racial inequality require economic reconfiguration.

GDP is insufficient. It ignores social value and the worst tendencies our economic system has produced: inequality and the climate emergency. Because GDP ignores the depreciation of physical and environmental capital goods, we will continue running down our human and natural assets,

even if GDP begins to rise.

And what about the pandemic? GDP may not have created coronavirus, but it certainly determined our capacity to respond to it – consider how many resources have been misdirected over the years through austerity that used GDP-based metrics to justify reduced spending.

So how do we measure economic recovery in a way that reflects what matters to us? The difficulty is in balancing useful but reductive simplicity versus the complicated reality of what makes a 'good life'. Left, liberal and right-leaning organisations have all waded in with alternatives.

The main alternative approach is to move away from a single metric to a bunch of indicators on a dashboard, such as housing, health, and the environment. This would reflect the multi-dimensionality of prosperity and quality of life. Examples include the OECD Better Life Index, UN Human Development Index and the Sustainable Development Index.

A subset of this approach are those that measure prosperity at more local levels, such as the Thriving Places Index. Another approach is to directly ask people about what matters to them. The results include the Happy Planet Index and my own department's Prosperity Index. These focus on people's wellbeing and quality of life as they see it.

Another suggestion is to use other single metrics to GDP, like the Genuine Progress Indicator. This includes financial estimates of unpaid household labour, environmental damage and income inequality. The next step is to embed these metrics into policy, as targets. In 2019, New Zealand did so, launching its 'wellbeing budgets', which include 43 indicators across 12 wellbeing areas such as housing, environment, and social connection. More countries and cities may follow, in their pandemic recovery, with Amsterdam leading the way.

At UCL's Institute for Global Prosperity, we've been asking people what a good life means for them as the basis for a citizen-led prosperity index. We work with councils and community groups to understand what metrics should be used to reflect community needs. These differ, and what gets measured nationally might not be the same as what should get measured locally. Knowing which inequalities exist across given groups can help redistribute resources across and within households. As we recover from the current crisis, we need to debate what we value in life and begin to measure the things that matter. I am not calling for the abandonment of growth, only the concept of growth defined by GDP. New metrics will force states not to seek to restore GDP without also restoring social equity and ecological equilibrium.

■ Ala'a Shehabi is deputy director of the Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL; this article also appears at theconversation.com

EXPERTISE

Mitch Benn

Comedian,
Musician,
Writer

As is generally the case with what we will, for the lack of a more accurate term, call our present 'government', I find myself wondering if I'd be eyeing their newfound enthusiasm for tackling obesity with less suspicion if it were coming from anywhere, or anyone, else.

This isn't some sort of 'Boris Derangement Syndrome' on my part; it's simply an inevitable by-product of living under the most relentlessly mendacious administration in my lifetime (which is up against some pretty stiff competition, while we're here).

I would say that the current government has a hidden agenda behind everything it does, except that they can't even be bothered to hide their hidden agendas properly any more. At least half of their agenda is poking out into the open at any given time.

And so, while a sincere attempt to address the shortcomings of our national diet might be a good and even timely thing, one can't help but suspect that this has more to do with adding another item to the government's list of Things We Can Blame The Virus On Rather Than Our Own Laziness and Complacency. "See, the fact that we didn't get it together to address the pandemic before it had already taken hold in this country, or that we can't be bothered to follow our own rules and just water them down when we get caught breaking them, or that it took us ages to get a testing programme up and running or that we kept buying fake PPE from some bloke on the internet wouldn't have mattered if *you* lot weren't all so fat."

Even when – and I speak here as someone whose weight problems are lifelong, well documented and indeed ongoing – one doesn't detect an ulterior motive in the powers that be trying to tackle The Obesity Epidemic, one feels a sense of dread and resignation that what we're in for is another round of government-sanctioned fat-shaming.

It doesn't matter whether this is the last thing on Boris Johnson or Matt Hancock's mind when they propose their anti-fatness measures; the sad fact is that the line between taking a stand against fatness and taking a stand against fat people is blurred at the best of times.

We live in a world with bullies in it. We could spend – and wiser people than I have spent – years dissecting what makes a person a bully; is there a reserve of spite and cruelty inside each of us that most of us manage to suppress? Is there a primal desire to find someone to cast out of the tribe before the rest of the tribe decides it's us who's getting cast out? Is it all to do with the basic human desire to feel good about ourselves, coupled with the basic human disinclination to actually do anything that might give us legitimate grounds to feel good about ourselves, leading many of us to take the shortcut of just finding someone else to feel better than?

Whatever the reason, there are bullies,



WHY I FEAR BORIS' OBESITY PURGE IS A BULLIES' CHARTER

and bullies gonna bully. But it's harder to be a bully these days than it used to be: they've had lots of their victims taken away from them.

Whether one regards it as political correctness gone mad or simply the advance of common decency, there just aren't as many groups of people upon whom it's considered acceptable to heap scorn and humiliation.

But they'll always have fat people to pick on.

Because unlike pretty much every other group whom one might think to victimise, the thing about fat people – think the bullies – is that it's "their own fault". As such, giving fat people grief about their size is *good*, because it might motivate them to do something about it, right?

I'm sure my readership consists of the kind of person who don't need to hear what I'm about to say right now but I'm going to say it anyway: if making fat people feel miserable about being fat helped them to lose weight there would be no fat people.

HIDDEN AGENDA: Boris Johnson's anti-obesity campaign is not driven by altruism, says Mitch Benn

Photo:
Getty Images

Trust me, being fat is a bloody miserable business in and of itself, no persecution required. And losing weight is not simply a matter of eating less; even before you factor in all the complicating psychological and social factors, losing weight is hard.

Over the years I've lost enough weight to make three or four more of me, and it was damned hard, and keeping it off is much harder, which is why I'm currently trying to lose weight again.

We could all do with eating more healthily. We could all do with cooking more of our food from scratch, and maybe there are things a government can do to make this more practicable and affordable. And I'm sure you have plus-sized people in your life; maybe they're trying to get fitter, maybe they're already a lot fitter than they look (thin and fit are not interchangeable concepts). But however they're getting on, please, don't ever think that making them feel bad about themselves would help them in any way.

It's not helping. It's just bullying.

Get more from your New European

PODCAST

Every Friday, Richard Porritt and Steve Anglesey analyse the latest events, talk to TNE writers and crown the Brexiteers of the week in a podcast that's both irreverent and informative

www.podfollow.com/TNE



FACEBOOK READERS' GROUP

Join thousands of readers of TNE in our Facebook group and join the debate and discussion about the latest political news.

Sign up at facebook.com/groups/theneweuropean



WEEKLY E-MAIL NEWSLETTER

Get our newsletter in your inbox every Thursday morning, with a preview of the week ahead and an essential round-up of politics and culture from around the continent.

Sign up at theneweuropean.co.uk



MORNING BRIEFING

Receive a morning update on Facebook messenger with all of the latest stories from our website and get breaking news alerts for the big stories.

Visit m.me/theneweuropean for details on how to sign up.





Films about the British empire can make awkward watching now, says **JAMES OLIVER**. But they all have a revealing story to tell



It was probably inevitable, in a country as obsessed with history as ours, that a conversation about modern racial equality would mutate into arguments over the past; from urgent protests about policing, immigration and representation to big rows about statues. How terribly British.

One particularly insistent strand of those arguments has concerned the empire and how the country should now see its imperial period. While many Britons remain proud that large parts of

PROBLEMATIC: Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Cary Grant and Victor McLaglen in *Gunga Din* (1939)

Photo: Getty Images

the world map were once shaded pink, and proclaim the period's supposedly benevolent consequences, it is a source of great shame for others, who see nothing but plunder and exploitation.

Such conflicting views are not new, but there now seems an increasing pressure to take sides in the growing clamour to confront our past.

If we're serious about having a reckoning with empire – if all those anguished requests to confront our history were sincere and not just so much

posturing – then we could do worse than to start by looking at our cinematic past, for a great many films were made about the British in India and Africa, all pith helmets and bushy moustaches balanced atop stiff upper lips.

They're products of the same culture, (usually) predicated on the same impulses and assumptions that drove conquest and colonisation.

EUROFILE CINEMA



From page 31

While history books can give us a good idea of what went down, the films of that era are revealing in other ways, showing what earlier generations of the British (and their allies) wanted to believe of themselves and their endeavours, no matter how odd they might seem today.

They also reveal things that the cold bronze and marble of statues cannot: the contradictions of the imperial project and – just sometimes – traces of doubt too.

That would come later, though. At the very start, the emphasis was on spectacle, just as it had been in the days of the magic lantern show and photographic lecture, showing far off lands and the heroic men (and occasional woman) who tamed them.

Even as the Boer War raged, British viewers could thrill to the exploits of the heroic British military against the wily Afrikaner, albeit in adventures filmed not on the Veldt itself but in Surrey.

Curiously, it seems to have been a subject that excited American filmmakers more than the Brits themselves, in the silent era at least. Most of the early narrative feature films on the subject are American, with the British favouring travelogues and documentaries, the scenery a bigger draw than anguished accounts of the White Man's Burden.

The man who did more than anyone to make the empire a subject for British cinema brought a different perspective to the subject.

While he later became a veritable pillar of the establishment – an intimate of prime ministers, knighted by his gracious majesty King George VI – Alexander Korda was Hungarian by birth. He wanted to build a British film industry to rival America's (or at least France's) and reckoned the best way to do it was to sell a semi-mythological image of the country, focussing on heritage and pageantry.

Amongst his films about famous heroes and infamous royals, Korda produced

BANK HOLIDAY FAVOURITE:

1 Poster for *Zulu* (1964)

2 A battle scene from Zoltán Korda's *The Four Feathers* (1939)

Photos: Getty Images

stirring tales of John Bull bestriding the world. His first such effort was *Sanders of the River* (1935), directed by his brother Zoltán, concerning the adventures of its title character, a district commissioner in Africa who has to deal with gun runners, slavers and natives who don't seem to understand that British rule is good for them.

It is a difficult film to watch today, even if one is not especially woke. Not the least of the problems is the way it handles its star. Paul Robeson was a towering cultural figure and it's mortifying to see him playing the childlike village chief who readily accepts the British order, most especially since Robeson is far, far more charismatic than Leslie Banks, the film's ostensible star. Take it as an unintentional illustration of how mediocre white men can prevail over black talent, though, and it's a storming success.

Robeson's unique presence was better served by later films he made in the UK thereafter (he was always a far bigger

star here than in his native America) and he later expressed great regret for his participation in *Sanders of the River*.

He had accepted the role because he thought that if he could portray his character with cultural accuracy and dignity, he could help audiences – especially black audiences – understand and respect the roots of black culture. But his understanding that the film would portray Africans positively was to be disappointed. The finished product was dedicated to “the handful of white men whose everyday work is an unsung saga of courage and efficiency” and Robeson's character, far from being a proud, wise leader, had been reduced to a servile lackey.

When he realised, he tried, unsuccessfully, to buy back all the prints to stop the film being shown. “I hate the picture,” he declared, bemoaning that it was the only film of his allowed to be shown in Italy and Germany, “for it shows the negro as fascist states desire him – savage and childish”.



Contemporary audiences were less fussed, though; it was a hit, giving Alexander Korda a reason to make another film in the same vein. This film – *The Drum* (1938) – would be set (and partially filmed) in India. Zoltán Korda would again direct, although this time he would make more impact on the film.

Zoltán never shared his brother's admiration for the British establishment, and held left-wing sympathies. During the making of *Sanders of the River* he'd become friends with one of the extras, a young man called Jomo Kenyatta, a student at the LSE who had introduced Korda to anti-imperialist politics.

(In time Kenyatta became the leader of the independence movement in Kenya and ultimately the country's first president, more notable achievements than standing around in a loin cloth on the set of *Sanders of the River*.)

No one would mistake *The Drum* for anti-Raj polemic though. It's a sub-Kipling adventure yarn, about brave British soldiers and a dastardly Indian

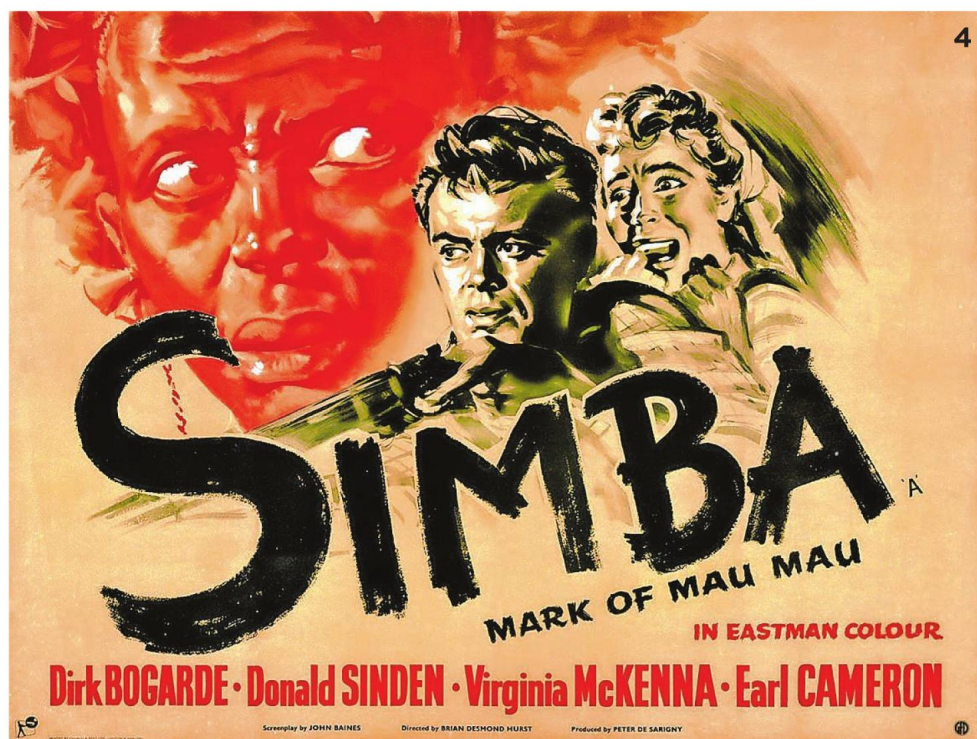
villain, all shot in glorious Technicolor. But even though it ultimately waves the union flag, there are moments that show Zoltán Korda had been reflecting on his conversations with Kenyatta.

Early on comes one of the starkest demonstrations of inequality in any British imperial movie, when a boy soldier berates an Indian servant.

Later on, that same boy soldier will develop a friendship with an Indian prince that – we may hope – shows him becoming more broadminded.

That Indian prince was played by the sub-continent's first great international star. Discovered by Alexander Korda while making an earlier picture, Sabu Dastagir – he was billed by his first name alone – was still only a teenager when he made *The Drum* but a supremely likeable screen presence.

There will be critics today who take a more jaundiced view of his persona; that he offered a safe, even infantilised, version of Indian identity. Let's not ignore the possibility that they're right



COLONIAL:

3 Dr Aziz Ahmed (Victor Banerjee) is arrested in a scene from David Lean's *A Passage To India* (1984)

4 Poster for *Simba* (1955)

Photos: Getty Images

but note too that Sabu's characters were always brave, loyal and determined.

Generations of small boys (and ex-small boys) wanted to be Sabu, or at least his best pal. There are worse role models. (A curiosity; while Britain's empire was near its very zenith in the late 1930s, two of its biggest domestic cinematic stars – Robeson and Sabu – were both people of colour.)

The Korda brothers' ultimate imperialist work was their 1939 film of *The Four Feathers*, an oft-filmed story of cowardice and redemption set in 1895, amidst the Mahdist war in the Sudan. More even than *The Drum* it is a *Boys' Own* romp, shot in even more glorious Technicolor that blazes off the screen.

It's not even especially bothered with subjugating the native population so you can watch it with a clear conscience... just about. If only they didn't keep referring to the dervishes as – oh God – "Fuzzy Wuzzies".

The pre-war period was the golden age of imperial movies. Hollywood was even

more besotted with the empire than Alexander Korda. These were the years of *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937) (Shirley Temple sorts out India), *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935) – a great favourite, that, of the then-chancellor of Germany, Herr Hitler – and, most especially, *Gunga Din* (1939). Taken from Rudyard Kipling's poem, and featuring the author himself (or at least a fictionalised version thereof), it's one of Hollywood's greatest adventures but one that needs almost as many allowances made as *Gone with the Wind*, which was released that same year: the villain of *Gunga Din* is a guru who exhorts his followers to rise up against the hated British. This character was based on that notorious rabble rouser Gandhi.

The degree to which this is problematic is in the eye of the beholder. These are unsophisticated films that trade in stereotypes: not just of 'the natives' but

EUROFILE CINEMA

IMPERIALIST:

1 Poster for *The Four Feathers* (1939)

2 Filming for Zoltán Korda's *The Four Feathers* took place on the Nile

3 Charles Hawtrey and Carmen Dene in *Carry On Up the Khyber* (1968)

4 Lobbycard for *Sanders of the River* (1935)

5 Nina Mae McKinney and Paul Robeson in *Sanders of the River*

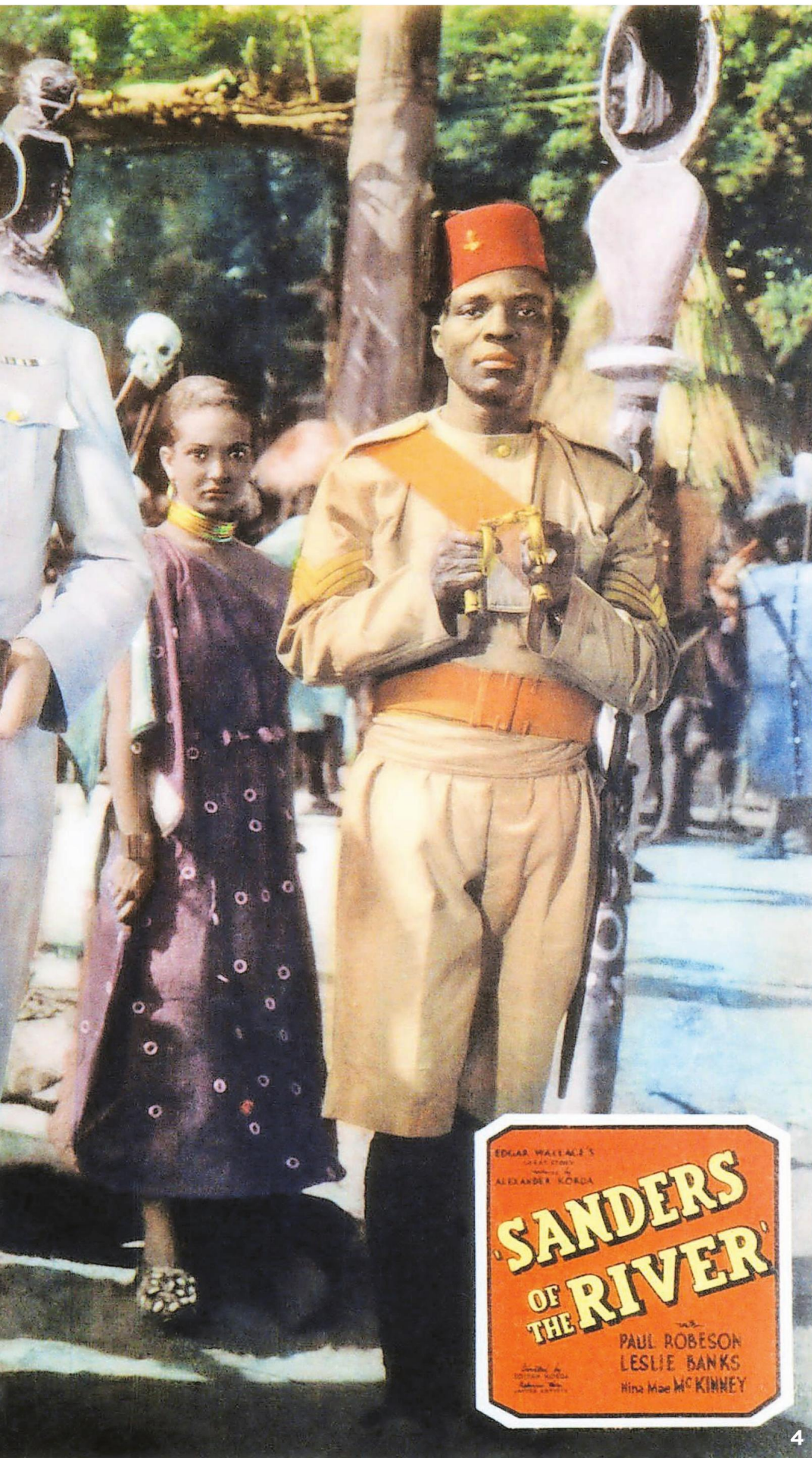
6 Robeson later declared his hatred of *Sanders of the River* and Zoltán Korda's movie is a difficult watch today

7 Stanley Baker and Michael Caine in *Zulu* (1964)

Photos: Getty Images



CINEMA EUROFILE



EUROFILE CINEMA



▶ From page 33

also the emphasis on exoticism and local colour. But all that means that it's actually quite easy to ignore the philosophies that underpin them; *Gunga Din* has exactly nothing to say about the Indian independence movement and once the obvious issues have been addressed, it's easy enough – if you're so minded – to ignore the politics and enjoy the adventure. Just sigh, say "it's a product of its times," and you're good.

Maybe the best example of this is *Zulu*, made in 1964. This one-time bank holiday favourite has little, if anything, to say about the empire. (The closest it gets is when someone asks the sergeant why the Impi warriors are attacking the understaffed British outpost. "Because we're here, lad" is the reply.)

The lack of African perspective isn't a deal breaker for those who love it, nor that it's fundamentally a story of white people killing large numbers of black

men. For its fans, the nature of the opponent is irrelevant: *Zulu* is about heroism and survival in the face of insuperable danger, and the brotherhood of war. It is not malicious, even if it's too much for bank holiday schedules now. Another product of its times.

Some films are not so easily assimilated, however. As the sun started to set on empire in the 1940s and 50s, filmmakers started to consider what it had all been for. While modern accounts stress the aforementioned plundering and exploitation, contemporary imperialists emphasised their 'civilising mission' (only they didn't put quotes around it).

Few films address this as clearly as *Men of Two Worlds*, released in 1946. It was directed by Thorold Dickinson, another man of impeccable liberal credentials (he'd made educational films on behalf of republican Spain), and it emphasises development and modernity; its main character Kisenga, played by Guyanese actor Robert Adams, returns

CYNICAL VISION:
1 Sean Connery and Michael Caine in John Huston's *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975)

Photo: Getty Images

ESTEEMED EARL

Among those to star in *Simba* was Earl Cameron, who died earlier this month at the age of 102.

Cameron, who played a doctor trying to reconcile his admiration for Western civilisation with his Kikuyu heritage, was one of the first black actors to forge a successful career in British film and television.

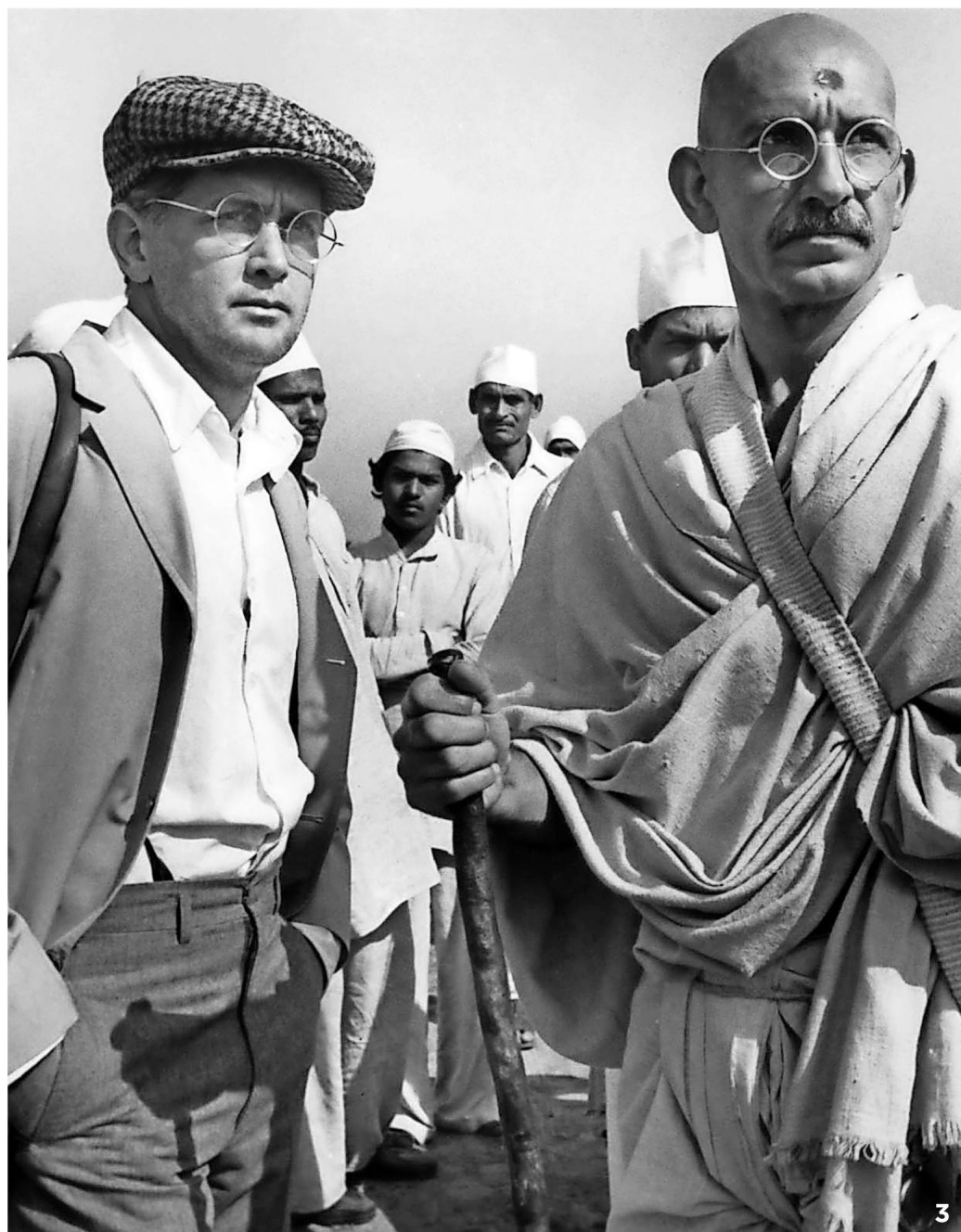
His other screen credits include 1965 Bond movie *Thunderball*, *Doctor Who* and the 1965 film *Guns at Batasi*, about a British military outpost during the final days of the empire in East Africa. Bermuda-born Cameron played the African commanding officer of the post-colonial government, which is overthrown in a coup.



PIONEER: Earl Cameron, left, in a scene from *Guns At Batasi* (1964)

Photo: Getty Images

CINEMA EUROFILE



from a stint in London (where he has achieved some acclaim as a composer) to work as a teacher in his native village, running into trouble with the local witch doctor, who disdains progress.

That the film means well should not be in doubt. But that only makes its flaws more painful. As presented here, the civilising mission is fundamentally patronising – even educated Africans like Kisenga are presented as star pupils rather than equals – and it's never questioned that 'civilisation' is the same as 'British values'. Clumsy though something like *Zulu* is, it's easier to watch that than a film that reminds you at every turn of just how much attitudes have changed.

Worse was to come. *Simba* (1955) is a film ripped from the proverbial headlines, set in Kenya, as the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (AKA the Mau Mau) fought a sometimes violent struggle for independence (one distinct from Kenyatta's movement, by the way, which was exclusively political).

True, it paints white settlers in a

deliberately poor light, repeatedly dismissing the natives as "children" and threatening what sound like terrorist reprisals to Mau Mau attacks. But again it's the good intentions that make it so awkward to watch today.

It condemns the violent instincts of both sides but its basic message is that both sides should chill: the white people can continue to boss everyone about but they should try and be a bit more polite about it.

That was 1955. The year after came Suez, the debacle that put the tin hat on empire; India was already free, the Winds of Change began blowing through Africa and British national pride began to be invested more in things like The Beatles and James Bond than in impressively bewhiskered colonial officials.

In 1968 came a film that showed how attitudes to empire had already changed, a pointed study of imperial decline (if not fall), with decadent aristocrats, troops who can't live up to their illustrious reputations and locals who

HISTORY LESSONS:

2 Cary Grant in *Gunga Din* (1939)

3 Martin Sheen and Ben Kingsley in *Gandhi* (1982)

Photos: Getty Images

realise just what a sham British claims to superiority really are. And since *Carry On Up the Khyber*, all films about empire have adopted a more critical stance too.

John Huston's marvellous *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975) marries the pulp excitement of *Gunga Din* to a cynical vision of empire building while *White Mischief* (1987) is a based-on-a-true-story of just how ghastly the colonial class in East Africa really were. *Gandhi* (1982) is overlong and dull but is at least an adequate history lesson; David Lean's *A Passage To India* (1984) is not only overlong but also horribly tone deaf, with Alec Guinness doing his best Peter Sellers as an Indian professor. (It is less dull though.)

The most interesting reactions to empire come from elsewhere and if we're having a serious accounting with our past, we ought to seek them out. India has produced many films about empire. *The Chess Players* (1977) directed by that great master Satyajit Ray, is a good place to start. The title characters are two

dissolute Indian nobles who idle their day away playing chess. But it also refers to the British as they scheme their way to take control over the noblemen's province. Checkmate. (Ray also directed *Distant Thunder* (1973) which doesn't directly confront empire but does deal with the Bengal famine of 1943, a devastating event still little known in this country, quite possibly because of our culpability.)

No doubt we can look forward to more films about empire soon and if they're as entertaining as *The Four Feathers* (and without the cringe factor) that's something to be welcomed. But it remains a hard subject for us to confront, not least is that it is so distant: the values that sent Britons out to girdle the earth are as incomprehensible to us today as our values will be to our great-grandchildren a century hence. Watching these films can only make that plain, obliging us to consider how our ancestors thought. If we are to judge them, let's try to understand them first.

EUROFILE SPORT

Tennis is bursting with talent, but its authorities have allowed certain elements to die out, to the detriment of the game, says **JOHN WILLIAM DEVINE**



It is established wisdom in boxing that 'styles make fights'. The best fights involve opponents of contrasting skills and abilities. Classic rivalries such as Muhammad Ali v Joe Frazier and, most recently, Tyson Fury v Deontay Wilder pitted 'boxers' (technicians who rely on boxing craft) against 'punchers' (street fighters who rely on punching power).

What is true in the boxing ring is also true on the tennis court: many of the greatest tennis rivalries have also comprised players of markedly different styles. Björn Borg v John McEnroe, Chris Evert v Martina Navratilova, and Pete Sampras v Andre Agassi all matched up a serve-and-volleyer against a baseliner.

These rivalries ran deeper than the closeness of their contests. They showcased two fundamentally different philosophies of tennis.

We are told that this is a golden era for tennis. In many ways, this is readily apparent. Tennis athletes have never been fitter, rivalries have never been more intense, and four players of this era – Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams – have a legitimate claim to be the 'greatest of all time'.

This has truly been a golden generation of tennis players. But it has not been a golden era for tennis.

The ethics of how sports are allowed to develop and what should count as 'progress' are central preoccupations of my academic research in the philosophy of sport. A golden era for a sport should showcase the full spectrum of skills and abilities – of excellences – that the sport makes possible.

By contrast, in this tennis era, the spectrum has narrowed so that all viable playing styles are fundamentally anchored to the baseline. Serve-and-volley tennis has disappeared, and all realistic grand slam title contenders are baseliners of one kind or another. The sport is more uniform in how it is played than at any other point in the professional era.

This narrowing of excellence is a problem because it limits how a player can express themselves. Sports present obstacles for players to overcome using their skill, guile, tenacity, and physical prowess. Constraints created by the rules and by one's opponent place obstacles in the way of scoring a goal, shooting a basket, or hitting an ace.

The demise of serve-and-volley tennis over the last two decades has shoehorned tennis players into choosing from among a small group of playing styles and it has effectively excluded those whose skill set does not fall within the smaller cluster of excellences that remain relevant in the sport.



GOLDEN GENERATION.. BUT NOT A GOLDEN ERA

By narrowing the spectrum of viable strategies, the sport is diminished, not only as an avenue for testing and showcasing a variety of different excellences, but also as an avenue for self-expression.

Serve-and-volley tennis is inherently confrontational. It narrows the physical space between opponents as one approaches the net, it quickens the exchange of shots, and it poses a challenge to 'hit past me or through me'.

The best serve-and-volleyers are relentless – they return to the net point after point, laying down the same challenge anew.

The beauty of this style lies precisely in its lack of surprise. It was entirely predictable that Pete Sampras or Martina

SINGLE-MINDED: The baseline game of Serena Williams, pictured in action against Simona Halep during the 2019 Wimbledon final, has produced 23 Grand Slam singles titles – more than any other player in the open era

Photo: Getty Images

Navratilova would attack the net after their serve.

Everyone, especially their opponents, knew this. And they knew that their opponent knew this. But they did it anyway. Like a football goalkeeper, they challenged their opponent to defy the odds and find that tiny spot beyond their reach – point after point.

However, net play is now a dying art. No serve-and-volleyer, male or female, has won a grand slam since Sampras's last US Open victory in 2002. Lighter, more powerful rackets, polyester strings, and the introduction of slower court surfaces and balls have shifted the odds heavily in favour of the baseliner and against the net rusher.

Polyester strings, in particular, have

made it easier than ever before for players to generate enormous spin. This spin in turn allows the baseliner both to dip the ball sharply over the net at the volleyer's feet and to find previously impossible angled passing shots.

The sight of Djokovic or Williams straining every sinew to reach the ball and then, at full stretch, hitting a sharp-angled passing shot for a clean winner is perhaps the defining image of modern tennis.

Any complex sport must allow different styles of play to flourish. Within the possible arrangements of the rules, there is an ideal balance – an equipoise – that allows a variety of styles a realistic prospect of success. When a sport achieves such a 'balance of excellences',



one style is not favoured to the extent that others are rendered redundant.

However, tennis authorities have allowed the development of equipment to run ahead of reflection on their effects, so that one of the sport's fundamental playing styles has become an historical curiosity, not the foundation of a serious game plan.

Approaching the net is now simply an occasional surprise play. Stewards of the sport have failed in their duty to manage its evolution so that all of the excellences that define the game are preserved.

Serve-and-volley tennis was not a feature of the sport from its inception, and it only came to prominence in the 1950s. However, it presented a genuinely innovative way to explore court geometry.

Such innovation should not be consigned to the scrapheap.

This is a golden generation of tennis greats who have brought baseline play to a point of perfection, but this era boasts strikingly little diversity in playing styles. Perhaps we have gone too far for a recalibration, but swimming has banned full body 100% polyurethane suits, and golf has banned the anchored putting technique, so why can't tennis reconsider rackets, strings, courts and balls so that net rushers once again have a fighting chance?

■ John William Devine is a lecturer in sports ethics and integrity at Swansea University; this article also appears at theconversation.com

EUROPEAN EXPLOITS

Author **NIALL GRIFFITHS** continues his occasional series of articles on adventures around the continent with his recollection of arriving in Romania with no luggage, no cash and not enough underpants



It's a uniquely horrible experience, watching the sacks and suitcases revolve on the carousel and yours isn't amongst them. Those cherished contours and colours of the bag that has accompanied you around the globe are an absence blaring from the belt. It's not only the inconvenience, the sheer pain-in-the-arsedness of it all (no clean clothes, no toiletries, no books to read or write in), it's the sensation of aloneness in a strange place, of suddenly having no trusted companion. There's an odd sense of abandonment. You stand and watch and hope. Eventually you're alone with the emptily-shunting belt.

You find a man in uniform and wrestle with him over the language barrier and you give him your contact details and enter the airport concourse. You have your cashcard, at least, but the ATM refuses to give you money so you call your bank only it's late and you are passed across several departments and, it seems, time zones, until you reach a real human being and you are told that the country you're in is on a finance fraud watchlist and you should've informed the relevant people of your intent to travel there at least a day beforehand. You'll be able to withdraw cash at opening of business tomorrow. But you're broke now; bereft of both lei and sterling. But the process cannot be expedited. You must, just, wait.

Sigh. Well, okay. You call your hotel and ask them if you can put a taxi fare from the airport on your account and you can so you do. You check in and don't unpack because you can't and you go for a wander, hungry and thirsty and the bars and takeaways that are still open are maddening to the moneyless; all that unattainable fun around, the lights and the music and the smells and the teeming people and all of it to be discovered and experienced with avidity and glee but not tonight, no; your first night in this new city will be a hungry and sober one. A manky-mouthed one, too; the hotel has no toothpaste or brush. But you can bathe, at least, and go to bed clean, if a bit peckish and halitotic. The unknown city throbs and croons outside the window. It looks like a good place.

The morning brings money. You buy toiletries and have a proper spruce, except you must put dirty clothes back on your sparkling body. You eat a tower of pastries and drink a gallon of coffee and then visit a department store of a type that hasn't been seen in Britain since the early 1980s. You buy socks. Two

shirts. A jacket. You buy the only boxer shorts available, elasticated things with the words 'Mr Big' emblazoned on the – ahem – business area.

You return to the hotel and change and then properly hit the city with a step that is sprung like a true Mr Big. You're re-invigorated, yes, but your missing luggage is a gap at your side and you wonder where in the world it is. What adventures it might be having. You take a bus to Bran castle which you've seen in your dreams; the tall white towers in the forest and the conical red raven-circled rooves. It is exactly what you expected it to be, as is Sighisoara, with its looming battlements and stalls selling Dracula-related tat (with which you fill your new pockets) and gaggles of goths milling moodily.

You're having a wonderful time. Here is the joy of discovery. There is a costumed man with a drum welcoming people in several European languages and you teach him the Cymraeg and he beams and adds it to his repertoire.

Two days later and your bag arrives at the hotel. You sign for it on a document that tells you it was diverted to Brisbane, a city in which you lived, a long time ago. As you unpack, you fancy that you can smell eucalyptus and it totters you a little to think that your sack, without you, has been in a place where you, as a bewildered little boy, last were three decades ago. The world and time shrink and expand like living lungs.

So now your familiar clothes are on hangers and your toiletries are arrayed. You tot up what you've spent so far and convert it to sterling on your phone and are startled; you've spent less than the cost of a packet of biscuits back home. The Mr Bigs were five pairs for a few pennies and they're what lasts longest; when the socks have gone through and the jacket has come apart, the undies still stand strong. Indeed, the elastic on the final pair snapped last night, years after they'd been purchased. I'll miss Mr Big.

You buy socks. Two shirts. A jacket. You buy the only boxer shorts available, elasticated things with the words 'Mr Big' emblazoned on the – ahem – business area

EUROFILE MUSIC

Juan-les-pins

A CITY IN MUSIC



**NOW LISTEN
TO THE MUSIC...**

Find the accompanying playlist on
Spotify. Just search

**NEW EUROPEAN:
JUAN-LES-PINS**

Featuring:

Une histoire de plage
Brigitte Bardot

Dans les rues d'Antibes
Sidney Bechet

The Cricket Song
Ella Fitzgerald

**Where Do You Go To
(My Lovely)?**
Peter Sarstedt

SOPHIA DEBOICK on the French resort that came to embody the very essence of glamour and hedonism



Juan-les-Pins had two golden eras, one in the carefree inter-war years and one in the 1960s, both decades of revolution in fashion, cinema and music and of beautiful people.

Situated between Cannes and Nice, the Cap d'Antibes peninsula had been a fashionable winter resort for the rich and famous and the world's peripatetic aristocracy since the coming of the railway to Antibes itself in the 1860s, but it was only in the 1920s that Juan-les-Pins, on the other side of the peninsula, became something more than a poor fishing village.

As a refuge of writers, artists and professional hedonists, it became synonymous with both summer leisure and the cultural zeitgeist and was where the high living of the 1920s was writ large.

Now, Juan-les-Pins is synonymous with the dream of the Côte d'Azur – crystalline seas, golden beaches and bronzed bodies.

Such imagery could only be soundtracked by jazz, and this is a place that for 60 years has hosted one of the key festivals of the international jazz calendar and become a legend in the genre.

Cole Porter could be credited for making Juan-les-Pins what it is today. In the early 1920s Porter was living it up spectacularly in Paris and Venice, but in the summer of 1922 he rented the lavish villa the Château de la Garoupe near the Cap d'Antibes peninsula's southern extremity and invited his old chum from Yale, Gerald Murphy, and his wife Sara to stay.

This ultra-modern, devastatingly fashionable couple had recently set up home in Paris, seeking an escape from the suffocating properness of their well-to-do families back in the US, and on Plage de la Garoupe they discovered a beach life that was the embodiment of the freedom they sought.

For the first time, beach sunbathing became a 'thing', and a fashionable one at that and the Murphys were sold on living on the French Riviera.

The Murphys returned to the south the following year, renting out the entirety of the palatial 19th century Hôtel du Cap for the summer. It was in that idyllic season that they inspired a key moment in Porter's fledgling career.

Porter had just one hit under his belt – *Old Fashioned Garden* from the revue *Hitchy-Koo* of 1919 – his many standards yet to be written, when he was invited by Gerald Murphy to collaborate on *Within the Quota* for the Ballets Suédois.

This little-remembered work premiered in Paris in October 1923 and the score lost for decades, but it was remarkable in two ways. Not only was it unusual as an American ballet with an American theme (it was about an immigrant to the US who becomes a film star), but its use of symphonic jazz was pioneering, and anticipated Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* by several months.

The Murphys moved to Cap d'Antibes



PLEASURE ON THE PLAGE

BEACH CHIC:

1 Music fans dancing the jerk in Juan-les-Pins, 1966

2 Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie performs in Juan-les-Pins, 1962. Gillespie's *Dizzy on the French Riviera* was released the same year

Photos: Getty Images

lock, stock and barrel the following year, their home at 112 Chemin des Mougins, further up the peninsula towards Juan-les-Pins, christened 'Villa America' and becoming the centre of a summer social scene which attracted the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who immortalised their dazzling personalities and physical beauty in *Tender Is the Night*, and Pablo Picasso, who produced several studies of Sara.

Soon railway fortune heir Frank Jay Gould seized on the virgin territory of Juan-les-Pins proper, renovating the old casino and then opening a luxury hotel, the fashionably Art Deco Le Provençal, in 1926.

The international glitterati flocked to both venues – the Duke of Windsor and Mrs Simpson, Charlie Chaplin, Marlene Dietrich and Maurice Chevalier. Less well-known musical stars like Lilian Harvey, the British-born star of German cinema who fled Nazi Germany for the Riviera, and French comic actor Georges Milton, were among many personalities who lived out their retirement years at Juan-les-Pins and died there in the decades that followed.

As France finally emerged from the shadow of war in the 1960s chic beach life



again came to stand for freedom. The 'Long Sixties' began in 1958 according to social historian Arthur Marwick, but by then Brigitte Bardot had already made both the Riviera's beaches and the bikini two crucial aspects of France's 1960s aesthetic via *Manina, la fille sans voiles*



FESTIVAL WALK OF FAME

On the periphery of the Jardin de La Pinède where the jazz festival takes place, Juan-les-Pins has its own walk of fame. Set in the pavement are the handprints of the musicians who have made Jazz à Juan legendary, from Sidney Bechet to Ray Charles, meaning that while the festival takes place only in mid-July, it is part of the town all year round.

Bechet, who had married in Antibes in 1951 – he recorded the typical Dixieland tune *Dans les rues d'Antibes* the following year – and become a longtime resident.

The setting was idyllic, making use of the Jardin de La Pinède pine grove in the heart of Juan-les-Pins, adjacent to the square that bears Frank Jay Gould's name as the man who made the resort, and the atmosphere of the incomparable experience of listening to the world's jazz greats perform within spitting distance of the sea amid the Mediterranean fragrances of pine, jasmine and honeysuckle are captured on several notable recordings.

Charles Mingus' electrifying free jazz performance at the first Jazz à Juan festival was captured on *Mingus at Antibes*, released by Atlantic in 1976, while Dizzy Gillespie's *Dizzy on the French Riviera* was released by Philips shortly after the 1962 appearance it documented.

Miles Davis in Europe (1964) was a snapshot of him in transition between his first and second 'great quintets' when he played the 1963 festival. The album *Ella at Juan-les-Pins* was particularly notable, Fitzgerald's barnstorming performance of 1964 including an improvised ode to the cicadas that were threatening to drown her out as the sun set.

The John Coltrane Quartet's 1965 festival performance was the only time any of Coltrane's masterwork *A Love Supreme* (1965) was performed live, and was later released as *Live in Antibes* (1988).

Juan-les-Pins was not only a stage for all-time great performances but it indirectly spawned many others, since Claude Nobbs, founder of the Montreux Jazz Festival 300 miles north, once said "If I hadn't passed through Antibes, Montreux wouldn't exist".

By the end of the 1960s Brit Peter Sarstedt's piece of accordion-laced faux European *Where Do You Go To (My Lovely)?*, which was a UK No.1 hit in early 1969, could use Juan-les-Pins as a byword for the jet-setting beautiful people of the Continent ("When you go on your summer vacation/ You go to Juan-les-Pins/ With your carefully designed topless swimsuit/ You get an even suntan").

Juan-les-Pins' glamour may have faded since as it has become overdeveloped, but the town's reputation was fixed for all time, and even if this is a summer when the town's streets will be largely bereft of sun-seekers and the Jardin de La Pinède has fallen silent, the music of Juan-les-Pins still has the power to transport to a European paradise.

(1952) and*And God Created Woman* (1957), the latter the Saint Tropez-set film which made an international star.

Bardot became the poster girl for the Riviera just as much as for France's era of sexual permissiveness and the triumph of youth. By 1960, both the bikini and Juan-les-Pins specifically were being immortalised on the French charts as symbols of the youthful zeitgeist.

Both pop diva Dalida and teen sensation Johnny Hallyday released French language versions of Brian Hyland's *Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polkadot Bikini* that year, and Hallyday played the Vieux Colombier on boulevard de la Pinède that summer and was photographed lounging on the beach.

That same year Lebanese novelty singer Bob Azzam had a hit with the cha-cha tune *Viens à Juan-les-Pins*, a tale of holiday romance and "salty kisses". In her brief singing career during the heady days of *yé-yé* Bardot would also sing of love by the seaside on *Une histoire de plage* (1964).

But 1960 was crucial for Juan-les-Pins for other reasons. The inaugural Jazz à Juan Festival was held that year as a tribute to the recently deceased clarinetist of the Jazz Age Sidney



ELVIS COULDN'T STOP WATCHING THIS MAN

In Matthew Kneale's brilliant novel *English Passengers*, your opinion of the leading characters is continually evolving as you see them from the perspectives of different people. It's a bit like that after you've spent a few years interviewing actors. Certainly, if you'd only ever talked to Stewart Granger about Stewart Granger, you could have been forgiven for thinking he was a consummate old pro and an enormously likeable human being.

He was not, however, an actor's actor; and, whenever I mentioned his name to other members of his profession, there was invariably a long sigh. It was like that with Roger Moore. He'd appeared with him in the film *The Wild Geese*, in which he'd played a mercenary employed by Granger's character, who was allegedly inspired by the tycoon Tiny Rowland. "I was sitting in a car with Richard Burton in driving rain and he'd just done a scene with Stewart and he turned to me and said wearily 'Roger, why does he always have to be such an unutterable s**t?' I mean at the ages we all are now – why can't he just grow up? I shook my head and said 'That's just Stewart, he can't help it'."

Moore was more charitable about him than Christopher Lee, who considered him to be a world class bore, and, as for Eleanor Parker, his co-star in *Scaramouche*, he was "a dreadful person, rude and just awful. Everyone disliked him. Just being in his presence was bad."

Still, Granger was charm personified when I met him in 1990. A mane of brilliantined grey hair, a deep tan, gleaming white teeth, he looked, even at 77, every inch the Hollywood star. He'd actually been born in west London, and, after Epsom College, he'd gone on to the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art as he couldn't think of anything better to do. It was pretty obvious from the start that casting directors were going to file his name under B for beefcake and it would be swashbuckling epics rather than Shakespeare for him.

Granger was residing in California when we'd met, but Glynis Johns and Rex Harrison had persuaded him to return to Britain to make a stage comeback with them in a production of Somerset Maugham's *The Circle*. Their ill health and death respectively meant he had become the only member of the original cast still standing for the transition from Broadway to the West End. I wondered if it was to honour Harrison's memory that he wanted to go ahead with the play's run. "No, it's money," he said, with a

broad smile. "It's always money. I don't ever work for the love of it."

If Granger was in a very bad mood making most of his films, it was almost certainly because he didn't really regard acting as a fit and proper job for a grown man. "If I was a more sensible human being, I'd have done something worthwhile with my life and become a doctor. My problem is I like a certain kind of lifestyle that is quite expensive to maintain and that requires money. People ask me sometimes how I could have appeared in such terrible films. The answer is always the same – money, money, money."

In his later years, the critics had started to discern a new depth in some of Granger's performances, but he saw that as ironic rather than satisfying. "It's rare for an actor to have looks and talent at the same time. Usually the talent comes after the looks have gone – when it's not an awful lot of use as no one's watching any more."

I'd no idea of quite how difficult Granger could be to work with when we met, but, looking back at what he said, it all fits into place. Acting just seemed to make him unhappy and every story he told me was to make light not of himself, but what he did for a living. The funniest of these was his account of how Elvis Presley had once come up to him in a restaurant. "He bounded up and said he'd seen me in *King Solomon's Mines* more than 60 times. I told him I was flattered. Elvis then shook his head sadly and added: 'I didn't have any choice in the matter, Mr Granger. You see, at the time I was working as an usher in a cinema where the godawful film was playing.'"



DISLIKED: Stewart Granger on set of *The Secret Invasion* (1964)

Photo: Getty Images

EUROFILE BOOKS

CHARLIE CONNELLY on an absorbing new book which explores the grief of a husband for his departed wife, as he turns to watching cricket at venues which had meant something to them



Most of us, even those fortunate enough not to have been directly affected by the virus, will have experienced over the past few months a level of disruption unprecedented in our lifetimes. We've lost jobs, been unable to attend family celebrations and funerals and had to cancel travel plans. For weeks on end we could go little further than the corner of our own street.

Fortunately most people have responded sensibly and stoically to this overhaul of how we live our lives, even in the face of colossally useless political leadership in Westminster and, most recently, professional whingers treating the occasional draping of a lightweight piece of material over part of their face as if their heads are being riveted permanently into an iron contraption last used during the reign of Louis XIV.

Whoever we are, whatever we do, life tends to have a routine that expands from the daily to the weekly to the seasonal to the annual. We don't take much notice of these ripples of ritual that spread out through the year but there are layers of them related to work, home, leisure, relationships, and on a deep level we're reassured by them all. They lend structure to our lives, sometimes as strong as a girder, often a little flimsier, but they're all a comforting presence that we often don't notice until they're gone.

When that happens it can be wholly unnerving, be it unexpected redundancy or the sudden curtailment of a long-established leisure pursuit. As Nick Hornby pointed out in *Fever Pitch*, football fans tend to think in seasons rather than years, and this season has been one of the weirdest on record.

Those of us who attend matches, who renew our season tickets every summer and plan our winters around the fixture list, find ourselves without the bi-weekly ritual of going to the match: the same train, bus or parking space, the same programme seller, clicking through the same turnstile, finding our seat or regular spot on the terrace, nodding at the faces with whom we've shared these rituals for years but don't even know the names that go with them.

Cricket fans have felt the Great Disruption more than most: until England took on the West Indies in a behind-closed-doors series that began in mid-July there had been no cricket at all this season, at any level, and if ever there was a sport that thrives on its layers of rhythms and rituals, whose enthusiasts seek them out as salve for the soul against the pressures of life, it's cricket. Whether it's the retired civil servant making his way to a near-deserted Grace Road to watch Leicestershire in a gentle, sun-dozed four-day match in the County Championship, or the child and parent in

a packed ground watching a T20 slogathon together as the sun sets behind the blazing floodlights, these routines mean something to people. Something profound.

Whether sport's your thing, or theatre, or live gigs, or the cinema, we're all wondering when they might get back to normal while trying to silence the whisper that it might never happen.

Will we ever be able to sit among the sunburn and beer snakes of a Test match, or experience the shared primal release of a goal as part of a packed football crowd again? We might get back there one day. It might take a while, not to mention a vaccine, but we might.

But what if, on top of all of this, you already know for certain that things will never be the same again? Important things. All-encompassing things. Everything.

Ian Ridley's life changed forever in the pre-dawn darkness of February 6, 2019 when his wife Vikki Orvice died of the cancer with which she'd suffered for the previous dozen years. She was at home, she was a successful sports journalist, most notably in athletics, and she was only 56. With Ridley himself a widely-respected sportswriter, if writing about sport had a power couple it was the Ridley-Orvice combo.

Ridley had fought – and continues to fight – his own battle with cancer. He's also a recovering alcoholic (and ghosted Tony Adams' groundbreaking 1998 autobiography *Addicted*), so knows more than most about facing down the biggest challenges. The death of his wife presented the biggest of them all, and he documents the first year after that cold February morning in a searingly honest and deeply affecting memoir *The Breath of Sadness*.

"This grief s**t," he writes, "coupled with cancer and the side effects of it, was exhausting."

The book is subtitled *On Love, Grief and Cricket* because, caught up in the disorienting swirl of devastating loss and the sudden absence of the most vital thing in his world, Ridley turns to watching cricket matches in search of comfort, or meaning, or distraction, or just familiar routine. He picks out games at a selection of venues that meant something to him and Orvice, locations where they'd watched games together or just towns that held particular significance for their relationship.

It's a good plan. There is something comforting about a day at the cricket, especially if it's a County Championship match. The game has its rituals, the change of ends every over, the breaks for lunch and tea and long periods where very little appears to be happening – Ridley quotes a match report he once sub-edited in which the reporter wrote: "the batsmen batted and the bowlers bowled" – and, possibly uniquely to cricket as an entertainment pursuit, there's only a mild obligation to study the events unfolding on the field.

Start leafing through a newspaper in the fifth row of the Old Vic during act two, for example, and people will look at you askance. In the bleachers at Wantage Road, Northampton, it's practically expected.

There's a curious mix of strict routine and relaxed informality about county cricket, the players chatting to people in the crowd, spectators moving between different parts of the ground, all with a complete absence of rancour that's filled



instead by a sense of escape from the world outside.

Time passes gently, the sun makes its diurnal progress over events, the shadows grow longer and the light turns golden and the game ticks away with its rhythms and intricacies. It's no wonder Ridley seeks this out in his hour of desperate, tormented grief. As a pursuit it's quietly glorious.

When I started *The Breath of Sadness* I'd half-expected an account in which cricket teached a newly-bereaved Ian Ridley to smile again. I was prepared for long meditations on how cricket, when you think about it, you know, when all's said and done, it's a sort of metaphor for life really, isn't it? I expected warm reminiscences about his and Vikki's life together interspersed with memories of great matches and great players of the past with occasional glimpses into the depth of his sadness.

What I got instead was something much deeper, much more profound. If there's ever been a more honest, intimate, visceral, unflinching account of grief than this, well, I'd be very surprised.

"So there, in two heartbeats, was

COMFORTING:
1 Spectators watch the day's play unfold during a County Championship match between Kent and Yorkshire at Canterbury, 2010

2 Vikki Orvice was an award-winning sports journalist

3 Writer - and Orvice's widower - Ian Ridley

Photos: Getty Images





already the double-edged sword of grief," he writes of his reaction to Vikki's death and the heartrending months that led up to it. "I was relieved it was over, for both of us. I was desperately sad that it was over. For both of us."

Some parts of the book make uncomfortable reading, the reader occasionally feeling as if they're intruding on something very private. But Ridley is a compelling narrator, pulling us by the sleeve through the horror, hope, sadness, desperation, burning injustice and occasional releases of gallows humour that go with living with a terminal illness.

He shows us his vulnerabilities, how despite trying to stay strong for his wife his gut-churning fear of the accelerated arrival of the inevitable occasionally gets the better of him. When Orvice faints in hospital while Ridley is off getting coffees from a machine, for example, he returns to see medical staff surrounding her and falls to his knees with a strangled yell in the middle of the ward, both cups falling to the floor.

It's this level of unbridled honesty that sets *The Breath of Sadness* apart; a sense

FIVE GREAT BOOKS OUT THIS WEEK

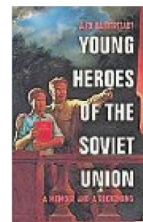
THE MANY LIVES OF HELOISE STARCHILD John Ironmonger (Orion, £16.99)

Spanning the history of Europe from the French Revolution to post-Brexit Britain via the world wars and the Prague Spring, this is a remarkably original novel in which teenager Katya Nemcova dreams memories that are not her own, particularly those that belong to Heloise, born two centuries earlier on the day a comet came.



YOUNG HEROES OF THE SOVIET UNION Alex Halberstadt (Jonathan Cape, £14.99)

Can trauma be inherited? Alex Halberstadt sets off on a quest to find out, in a family story that dates back a century and includes a grandfather who is likely to be the last surviving bodyguard of Joseph Stalin. From Ukraine to Lithuania via Moscow and New York, this is a multigenerational tale of fear, suspicion, melancholy – and rage.



ALL MEN WANT TO KNOW Nina Bouraoui, trans. Aneesa Abbas Higgins (Penguin, £12.99)

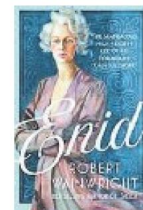
A semi-autobiographical novel and international bestseller that won an



English PEN Award, *All Men Want to Know* traces Nina's blissful childhood in Algeria until it's interrupted by an act of violence that forces the family to flee to Paris where she plunges into a confusion of sexualities and identities. Published in English for the first time.

ENID: THE SCANDALOUS HIGH SOCIETY LIFE OF THE FORMIDABLE LADY KILLMORE Robert Wainwright (Allen & Unwin, £16.99)

Six feet tall with silver hair, Enid Lindeman was a formidable presence even when not walking her pet cheetah in Hyde Park with a lead attached to a diamond collar. A startling biography of a woman whose life swung between driving an ambulance in the First World War and owning the largest house on the French Riviera, one she possibly won at cards.



THIS LITTLE FAMILY Inès Bayard, trans. Adriana Hunter (Fourth Estate, £12.99)

Life for successful Paris couple Marie and Laurent seems to have everything when their first child is born, until a shocking event unravels Marie's life in remarkable circumstances and causes tragedy to strike the household. A dark and compelling novel by a French writer of immense promise.



that some men, certainly this man, are practically held together by their love for and by their partner. It's an incredible, nourishing strength gained through a deep, mutual faith between two human beings, and when that relationship is sundered by death a new, different kind of strength has to be found.

The cricket matches are almost incidental, a yardstick for how Ridley is dealing with his grief and slowly locating that new kind of strength. When he starts becoming absorbed by passages of play, or laughs to himself at something he's overheard there's a tremendous surge of guilt that he's somehow disrespecting Orvice's memory.

That guilt never goes away but we see it by turns recognised, framed and, in a way, embraced.

"The tea interval was a joy," he writes of a match at Scarborough. "Dads and lads thronged the outfield for impromptu cricket games. Vikki would have loved the three young girls having a game of their own in the middle of the ordered chaos. Elders gathered at the rope now erected to protect the square, pondering its wear and tear, sagely opining on how it might play later in the game. Gulls swirled, squawked and swooped to fight over dropped chips among the benches."

It's a scene familiar to anyone who's been to a county cricket match, but the

fact that Ridley is even noticing this collection of little *mis-en-scènes* gladdens the reader.

Each represents a different kind of happiness, the profusion of tiny moments of joy that we see every day as long as we choose to notice them. These happened to be at a cricket match, a sport Ridley loves at a match in a place that meant something to him and Orvice.

The path through grief is scattered with tiny joys like these and the trick is to spot them. You will, when you're ready.

It would be trite to say the book contains life lessons or comfort in these dark times. For one thing that's not what Ridley is trying to achieve. This is part working through his own grief in the only way he knows, by writing, and part wanting the world to know exactly what a remarkable woman he was married to.

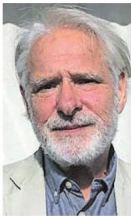
It's clear that Vikki Orvice was indeed a remarkable woman, one who loved and was loved by a remarkable man. I hope it isn't presumptuous to say that she would have been proud of this book, and especially its author.

■ *The Breath of Sadness: On Love, Grief and Cricket* by Ian Ridley is published by Floodlit Dreams, price £13.99



EUROFILE POEM AND PUZZLES

a poem for europe



DR DOUG SANDLE is a retired chartered psychologist, researcher and academic, having worked in art, design and architecture at the former Leeds Metropolitan University. With poetry and short stories published and also a BBC play broadcast in earlier years, he is now spending more time on creative writing.

AFTER LOCKDOWN

I want to stare at you.
To look, to watch the blinking of eyes,
the movement of lips, the way
your body leans and stands
and the rippling of your hands.
I want to touch you.
To feel the coolness of your face,
the rising and lowering of breath,
the folds and feel of how you dress.
I want to listen to you
free of screen and standing near,
no virtual self or avatar.
To know you, and you again,
and as you really are.



DORMONT ESTATE
LIVING IN BALANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Cryptic crosswords sponsored by

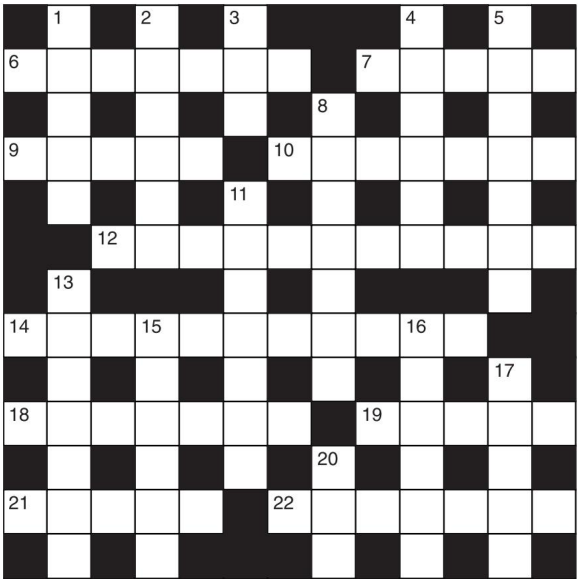
www.dormontestate.com

Cryptic 1

- Across**

6. Temporary suspension in sentence by the Spanish officer (7)
7 & 9 Across. Not necessarily adverse blows to commerce (5,5)
9. See 7 Across.
10. Firearms belonging to Nym's companion? (7)
12. A single knocker, we're told (11)
14. Rescuing the girl is a redeeming feature (6,5)
18. Gas inclined to be used around Pennsylvania (7)
19. The ability to observe part of a rifle (5)
21. See 8 Down.
22. Grasp a method for escape (7)
- Down**

1. The daily record, I see, will show commonsense (5)
2. Provide support, but cause some delay (4,2)
3. See 20 Down.
4. A man from the Mediterranean comes out of a trance (6)
5. Use fawning words at a duel, maybe (7)
8 Down & 21 Across. Art gallery? (7,5)
11 & 17 Down. Making progress counterfeiting one side of a coin (7,5)
13. Continue to cause a rumpus (5,2)
15. I'm getting the staff duty (6)
16. To find the very peak, do some mountaineering, we hear, with a hatchet (6)
17. See 11 Down.
20 & 3 Down. The fellows are after a swan – they commit themselves to writing (6)

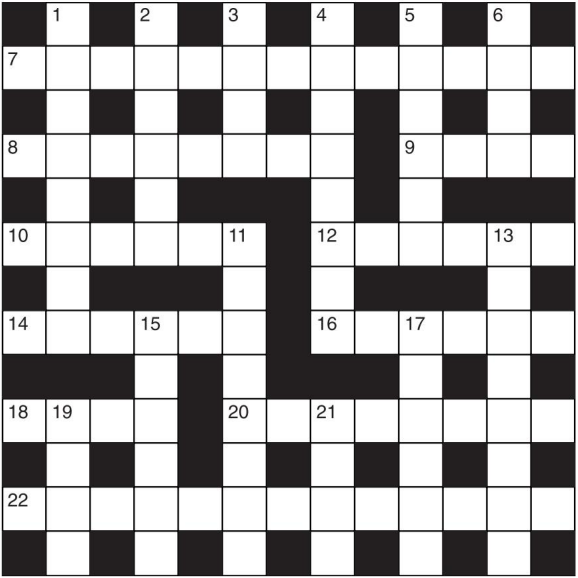


Cryptic 2

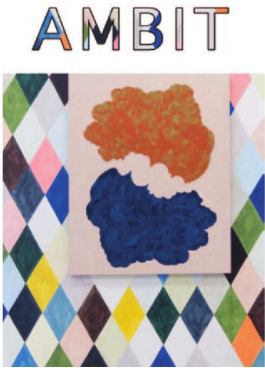
- Across**

7. Flying holiday? (5,2,3,3)
8. Hang around road with an inhabitant of Africa (8)
9. Detail from 6 (4)
10. Gleans they are higher beings (6)
12. Not under control as a result of publicity given to split? (6)
14. The sort of predicament an abrasive person will get into? (6)
16. Her cue for game (6)
18. Give out 9 (4)
20. Could one link rage with this Shakespeare character? (4,4)
22. One most unlikely to have swallowed a dictionary? (3,2,3,5)
- Down**

1. Chance I'm taking to become a skilled workman (8)
2. A meeting place in the street (6)
3. Note: it loses a thousand and becomes quite small (4)
4. How old is the rock? Palaeolithic or neolithic (5,3)
5. No rise for one's superior (6)
6. When to return 18? (4)
11. Slink away – the tell-tale is leaving (5,3)
13. Are they in hospital teams? (8)
15. Movement indicates first part of play is being performed (6)
17. Inexperienced enough to daunt about everybody (6)
19. Intend to be stingy (4)
21. Reporters from all quarters (4)



A poem for Europe is edited by Briony Bax, Poetry Editor.
Submit your poems to poetryeditor@theneweuropean.co.uk



Poet or Writer?

Get into Ambit, the magazine that loves new literary talent.

www.ambitmagazine.co.uk

Crossword solutions

- Cryptic 1**
Across: 6 Colone!; 7 Trade; 9 Winds; 10 Pistols; 12 Opportunity; 14 Saving grace; 18 Propane; 19 Sight; 21 House; 22 Getaway. **Down:** 1 Logic; 2 Hold up; 3 Men; 4 Cretan; 5 Adulate; 8 Picture; 11 Forging; 13 Carry on; 15 Impost; 16 Climax; 17 Ahead; 20 Pen.
- Cryptic 2**
Across: 7 Leave in the air; 8 Ghaniat; 9 Item; 10 Angels; 12 Adrift; 14 Scrape; 16 Eulchre; 18 Emit; 20 King Lear; 22 Man of few words. **Down:** 1 Mechanic; 2 Avenue; 3 Mini; 4 Stone Age; 5 Senior; 6 Time; 11 Sneak off; 13 Forwards; 15 Action; 17 Callow; 19 Mean; 21 News.

Sudoku solutions

Medium 1

1	6	5	8	3	2	4	7	9
4	9	7	1	6	5	2	3	8
8	3	2	7	9	4	6	1	5
3	8	1	4	7	6	9	5	2
2	5	9	3	8	1	7	4	6
6	7	4	5	2	9	1	8	3
9	1	3	6	4	8	5	2	7
5	2	8	9	1	7	3	6	4
7	4	6	2	5	3	8	9	1

Medium 2

8	2	4	9	7	3	6	5	1
3	5	7	6	2	1	9	8	4
1	9	6	8	4	5	2	7	3
6	3	5	4	8	2	7	1	9
4	8	9	1	3	7	5	2	6
7	1	2	5	9	6	3	4	8
5	6	3	7	1	8	4	9	2
9	7	1	2	6	4	8	3	5
2	4	8	3	5	9	1	6	7

Numberfit solutions

1

1	5	2	5	3	7
5	4	2	5	6	3
1	2	2	3	2	4
1	3	3	2	4	4
3	1	2	4	3	4
3	1	2	4	3	4
5	4	4	2	2	1
2	5	5	3	4	5
7	3	4	4	5	1
2	5	5	3	4	5

2

6	4	5	1	8	6	7	4
4	3	2	5	3	4	1	4
1	2	5	6	8	3	5	1
3	9	2	9	1	1	6	5
2	5	5	2	2	8	5	4
4	1	3	2	3	3	4	4
4	4	1	5	5	8	4	5
7	2	2	0	9	9	3	9
6	4	5	4	8	6	6	3

Hard 1

8	7	6	4	1	2	5	9	3
2	4	9	3	5	6	8	7	1
1	5	3	7	8	9	6	2	4
7	6	8	2	9	1	4	3	5
9	1	2	5	4	3	7	8	6
6	9	7	1	2	4	3	5	8
3	8	4	9	7	5	1	6	2

Hard 2

2	6	4	3	9	1	5	7	8
5	7	3	6	8	2	9	1	4
8	1	9	7	4	5	6	2	3
6	3	7	5	1	4	2	8	9
1	8	2	9	6	7	4	3	5
4	3	5	6	7	2	1	9	8
5	2	1	6	3	8	9	4	7
6	9	7	1	2	4	3	5	8
3	9	8	4	7	6	1	5	2

Sudoku – medium 1

	6		8		2		7	
4		7				2		8
	3			9			1	
3			4		6			2
		9				7		
6			5		9			3
	1			4			2	
5		8				3		4
	4		2		3		9	

Sudoku – medium 2

	2		9		3		5	
3		7		2		9		4
	9						7	
6			4		2			9
	8						2	
7			5		6			8
	6						9	
9		1		6		8		5
	4		3		9		6	

Sudoku – hard 1

8	7					5		
2				5	6			
					9	6		4
				9		4	3	
	1		5		3		8	
	3	5		6				
5		1	6					
			1	2				8
		4					6	2

Sudoku – hard 2

		4		9		5		
			6		2			
8				4				3
	3		5				8	
1		2				4		5
	4				3		6	
7				3				6
			1		8			
		8		7		1		

Numberfit

Fit the listed numbers into each grid.

Numberfit 1

2 digits: 14 – 41
3 digits: 112 – 114 – 122 – 133 – 235 – 252 – 254 – 523 – 544 – 545
5 digits: 24422 – 32445
6 digits: 443115 – 523144 – 553455 – 554255
7 digits: 1135227 – 1152537 – 7155342 – 7344512
9 digits: 152324454 – 312434233 – 554521152

Numberfit 2

2 digits: 15 – 43 – 51 – 93
3 digits: 124 – 125 – 220 – 253 – 413 – 432 – 493 – 506 – 633 – 916
4 digits: 2528 – 2552 – 2854 – 8582
5 digits: 59534 – 59838
7 digits: 1255835 – 4155845
9 digits: 641324476 – 641644536 – 645186746 – 645486636

THE JAMESTOWN CONNECTION

PETER TRUDGILL on the first meeting of two languages, one of which has since died out – but not without leaving some traces



raccoon, from *rarowcun*; and *terrapin*, from *torup*. Some reports suggest that more words have been borrowed into English from Virginia Algonquian than from any other Native American language. Other items from this now tragically dead language which many English speakers are still familiar with today include *hickory*, from *pawcohiccora*, which actually meant the ‘milk’ made from hickory nuts; *moccasin*, from *mockasins*; and *tomahawk*, from *tamahaac*.

The first location in which any sizeable group of native speakers of English became successfully established outside the British Isles was the Jamestown settlement, in what was to become the United States of America.

It was founded on May 14, 1607, as a private venture by the London Company under Captain John Smith, with a charter granted by King James I of England and Scotland.

Nobody applied for a charter from the indigenous people who had already been living there for thousands of years. The main goals of the Company in the founding of the settlement were not only to convert the natives to Christianity but also to find and extract gold and silver, as well as, astonishingly, locate a river route to the Pacific Ocean to facilitate trading with the Far East.

The distance of the voyage from London to Jamestown was about 3,200 nautical miles, and it took four long months to cross the ocean. The Company’s three ships sailed out of London at the end of December 1606, and it was not until April 26, 1607, that the more than a hundred anglophone settlers landed in the Americas.

The exact site of the settlement was finally determined two and a half weeks later, near to modern-day Williamsburg in what is now Virginia. It was named after King James, who had given them permission to settle there.

The area was inhabited by Native American tribes – they had naturally given no such permission – who were members of the Powhatan Confederacy. They spoke an Eastern Algonquian language known to linguists as Virginia Algonquian, which at that time had perhaps 20,000 speakers.

In the early years of the Jamestown settlement, the English settlers really had no idea about how to survive in their new environment. They were therefore very dependent on the Native Americans for food; and they appear to have learnt quite a lot of Algonquian words which, unsurprisingly, included the names of a number of potential foodstuffs, such as *hominy*, ‘ground maize kernels’, from *uskatahomen*; *persimmon* from *pushemins*; *opossum*, from *opassom*;

After three years, the Jamestown colony was very close to failing. In the August of 1607, many of the colonists died from dysentery as well as other diseases; and then in the autumn of 1609, the indigenous people began a campaign of starving the English out of what they naturally still regarded as their territory.

They stopped bartering with the settlers for food, and attacked men who ventured out of the settlement to go hunting.



The coming winter came to be known as the ‘Starving Time’; and when the spring of 1610 arrived, large numbers of the colonists had perished. A decision was taken to abandon the colony, and the whole community started to sail for home. But then other English ships suddenly appeared on the horizon, loaded with many more colonists and supplies, and they turned back. In the end, the colony did survive.

A temporary peace was also achieved with the Native Americans. But that ultimately did the Virginia Algonquians and their language absolutely no good at all.

Tragically, like many other Eastern Algonquian languages, Virginia Algonquian eventually died out, as those members of the community who had survived the conflicts with the settlers and the European diseases they had imported, gradually shifted, under various different demographic, social, and economic pressures, to speaking English.

STARVE

The original meaning of *to starve* was ‘to die’, which is what the related Dutch word *sterven* still means. The more specific ‘die from hunger’ meaning developed in the 14th century, as did the northern and west of England dialectal usage ‘die from cold’: *Put on thee coat, thou’ll be starved!*

COLONIST: Engraving showing Jamestown settler John Smith among the Native Indians of Virginia Photo: Getty Images

EUROFILE GREAT LIVES

MOTHER LAND: Soviet dissident writer and Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn in Vladivostok on his return to Russia, 1994

Photo: Getty Images



GREAT EUROPEAN LIVES

BY CHARLIE CONNELLY

#158

ALEKSANDR
SOLZHENITSYN

DECEMBER 11, 1918 – AUGUST 3, 2008

He looked apprehensive in the doorway of the Alaskan Air jet that had just landed in Magadan, on the Sea of Okhotsk in eastern Siberia, from Anchorage. His eyes darted from side to side as the wind toyed with his beige raincoat and pulled at his Tolstoyan beard. For a brief moment he appeared reluctant to disembark, then pulled back his shoulders, lifted his chin and descended the stairs, hands gliding over the handrails. At the bottom he took a few steps forward and stopped in front of the assembled journalists, glassy-eyed, as if looking through them. He was engulfed by people, lenses in his face, the young woman in traditional costume there to present him with the customary Russian welcome of bread and salt trying to preserve her immaculate smile as she was jostled by men with cameras and Dictaphones.

In the middle of the *mélée* Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn stood impassively. He breathed in deeply, exhaled slowly, bent forward from the waist and laid the palm of his right hand on the tarmac in confirmation that yes, he really was standing on Russian soil for the first time in two decades. He could have flown directly to Moscow but instead chose a circuitous route. If he was to return to Russia, it was to be to the whole of Russia. That's why he touched down in a small, out of the way airport on the eastern fringe of the country at the end of May 1994.

From Magadan Solzhenitsyn was flying on to Vladivostok, where he would board a train and cross the entire country, stopping regularly to greet well-wishers before arriving in the capital city he'd last seen from the aircraft that deported him on February 12, 1974.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was one of the key figures of the Cold War. His writing, and his epic history of Stalin's labour camps *The Gulag Archipelago* in particular, made him the face of resistance to Soviet state oppression.

Indeed, it was the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* that had sealed his expulsion. Written over several years during the 1960s it ran to more than 300,000 words and by 1973 had made it to publishers in Paris and New York on microfilms smuggled out of the USSR.

Solzhenitsyn had planned for the book to be published unofficially in the USSR first, but in September 1973 the KGB forced his hand by taking possession of a microfilm after interrogating the author's copy typist Elizaveta Voronyanskaya, who was found dead shortly afterwards in an apparent suicide.

The foreign editions went ahead almost immediately, lifting the lid on the Soviet

system of forced labour camps for the world to see. Solzhenitsyn was expelled within weeks of the book's publication, arriving in West Germany in February 1974, moving on to Zurich before settling in a small town in Vermont where he remained as a virtual recluse for 18 years.

In many ways Solzhenitsyn, once a poster boy for Stalin's education system, made an unlikely thorn in the Soviet side. Born into a privileged family a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, he grew into an ardent, tubthumping Marxist-Leninist. His father had been a decorated officer in the Russian imperial army during the First World War but was killed in a hunting accident six months before Solzhenitsyn's birth. His mother came from wealthy stock – an uncle owned one of only nine Rolls-Royces in the whole of Russia – but the revolution and widowhood handed her a frugal life in which she supported her son by working as a typist.

Solzhenitsyn became an enthusiastic member of Komsomol, the Communist Party youth movement, and embarked on a mathematics degree alongside a diploma in literature.

The epitome of communist youth, Solzhenitsyn's intellectual achievements in the name of the revolution saw him awarded a prestigious scholarship that carried Stalin's name, one of only eight awarded across the Soviet Union.

"From childhood I had somehow known that my objective was the history of the Russian Revolution," he wrote. "To understand the revolution I had long since required nothing beyond Marxism. I cut myself off from everything else."

When the USSR joined the Second World War Solzhenitsyn became captain of an artillery unit in East Prussia. Even in the midst of war his passionate belief in communism never dimmed, and didn't stop him having reservations about aspects of Stalin's leadership either. When he expressed those reservations in a letter to a friend it was more than enough to have him arrested.

At first his naïve faith in the intellectual purity of the Soviet Union convinced Solzhenitsyn he was being taken to Moscow to discuss his ideas, but once in the capital he found himself first in the Lubyanka prison, then sentenced to the eight years in the labour camps that would come to define his life.

His mathematics qualification saw Solzhenitsyn transferred to a *sharashka*, as much a scientific research centre as a labour camp, where he found himself among other intellectuals tasked with producing a telephone scrambling device. There was an incongruous level of incarcerated freedom in the *sharashka*:

Solzhenitsyn and his fellow exiles were able to discuss politics, read a wide range of literature and even listen to BBC broadcasts on the radio.

It was here that his thinking was transformed. He abandoned his Marxist convictions and withdrew from the telephone project in favour of manual tasks. The *sharashka* requiring a mathematician not a woodcutter, he was soon transferred to the labour camp at Ekibastuz in Kazakhstan. His three years there would later be fictionalised in his novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

In 1953 Solzhenitsyn was released into internal exile in Kazakhstan just as news of Stalin's death emerged. Khrushchev's less oppressive form of leadership led to Solzhenitsyn's rehabilitation and by the dawn of the 1960s his work was being widely read in editions published unofficially yet broadly tolerated. In 1962, with Khrushchev's personal approval, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published in the anti-Stalinist journal *Novy Mir*. The closest there had ever been to a warts-and-all account of the *gulags*, *Ivan Denisovich* was a sensation: Solzhenitsyn was elected to the Soviet Writers' Union, nominated for the Lenin Prize and credited with the rebirth of literature in the USSR.

When Khrushchev was removed in 1964, however, and replaced by the more authoritarian Leonid Brezhnev, Solzhenitsyn found himself out in the cold again. He worked tirelessly in secret on *The Gulag Archipelago* and set his sights on the Nobel Prize for Literature, becoming obsessed with winning the award that Boris Pasternak had been forced to turn down in 1957.

"All the more vividly did I see it, all the more eagerly did I brood on it, demand it from the future. I had to have that prize," he wrote. "My actions would be the opposite in every way of Pasternak. I should resolutely accept the prize, resolutely go to Stockholm and make a very resolute speech!"

Awarded the prize in 1970, however, Solzhenitsyn was unable to make his speech: he was embroiled in a messy divorce at the time as well as the birth of his son.

By then he had burnt literary bridges at home. In 1967 he'd written to the Writers' Union insisting their Congress "demand and ensure the abolition of all censorship, open or hidden". He was expelled from the organisation two years later, setting in motion the process that ended with his deportation.

On that epic 1994 train journey across Russia he found his homeland "tortured, stunned, altered beyond recognition". In Moscow he soon became disillusioned with the crime, corruption and the decline he saw of the Russian spirit he'd always sought to safeguard against oppression.

In an echo of his wartime arrest, Solzhenitsyn had expected to be feted and consulted by the new political elites but his opinions regarding the way forward were never solicited. It was June 2007, a year before his death at the age of 89, before any Russian leader saw him when he was visited by Vladimir Putin. What he might think of the current Putin regime is perhaps hinted at by something he told journalists that day on the apron at Madagan.

"The people are not the masters of their own fate," he said, "and so we cannot talk about democracy."

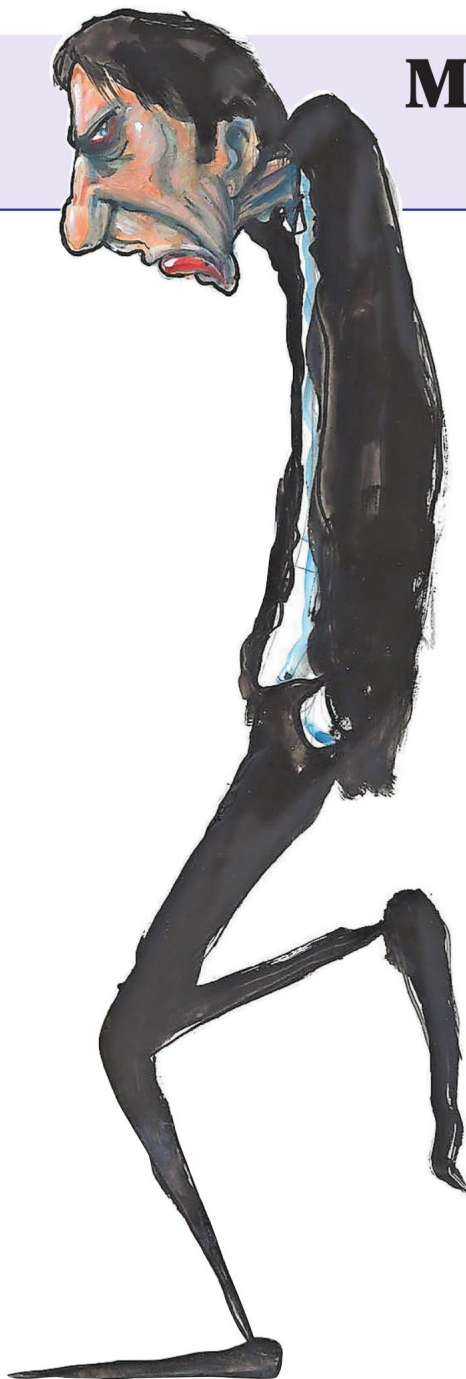
WILL SELF

She took me to the Uffizi but I really didn't want to go in – the galleries were so crowded with tourists, and being on the small side I knew I wouldn't really see much of the paintings besides random details. Also, I was reading this amazing book and wanted to find out how it would finish. Initially, she sat me on a marble bench in the corridor and went away – but then she came back, and said it would be a sin if I didn't at least come in and look at the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus* – and I probably said something brattish, like: 'She's not actually being born right now, it's just a painting,' and then my mother hit me: an open-handed blow to the head, quite hard as I remember.

I daresay there are some readers who'll still condone this half-century old corporal punishment; surely, even aged nine I was well brought up enough to know when to check my privilege? After all, not many English boys got the opportunity to visit Italy in 1970 – let alone see the most celebrated paintings of the Renaissance. But there I was, sulkily insisting that Eric Williams's classic tale of heroism in the face of Nazi tyranny, *The Wooden Horse*, took cultural precedence over Botti-bloody-celli.

Contra modish trauma theory, I think it's partly that open-handed blow that's made me remember that it was Williams's book I was reading – my mother hit me a fair bit as a child, although not so often that it became a blur; besides, this was in public. But I also think it was the fact that I was reading at all. This was – and remains – my favoured cultural experience: lacking the commercial apparatus surrounding the visual arts (at least proximately), the relationship between reader and writer is direct and intimate, so the very antithesis of revolving through a packed art gallery or museum. The subject matter of the book was also important: Williams and his comrades were attempting to escape from Stalag Luft III by using a vaulting horse as a cover for a tunnel-digging operation – while now I come to think of it, I've been attempting to escape from art galleries using a similar camouflage technique for decades.

Instead of a wooden horse, I've constructed a papery one: by writing pages and pages of criticism of the visual and plastic arts, I've been able to get into galleries when they're devoid of other visitors; and either before or after the gift shop has opened. In an essay often referenced in this column, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility*, Walter Benjamin argued that by this fact alone, formerly powerful works of art – such as the *Primavera* – were drained of that powerful aura compounded of their uniqueness and being handmade. I knew the *Primavera* long before we arrived at the Uffizi, because my mother had been to Florence a couple of years before, and brought back a reproduction of it on a plastic tray she'd bought at the gallery. Thus it was the work's reproducibility I encountered before I did the work itself – and surely, this is even truer for a vast number of contemporary



Multicultural Man .. on enjoying art



MEMORIES: Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (1484-1486)

gallery-goers. Even if you can stumble on a great work of art unsuspecting and so experience its full, auratic charge – that experience is entirely hedged around by the booking of timed tickets, and the soft shoe shuffle past the iconic work, followed by the inevitable exit via the gift shop. Of course, it was the reopening this week of galleries and museums in England summoned up this not-so-sweet remembrance of things (and people) past.

A friend who works at Tate Modern wrote to say he was anxious about going back to work – and who can blame him: PPE or not, he's staring down the barrel of a fleshy gun loaded with coronavirus virions. A couple of weeks ago I wrote about our frothy-coffee economy – but really our cultural economy is equally insubstantial; depending as it so crucially does on visitor numbers. I can't tell you how overpowering it can be to witness great Renaissance works in an entirely empty gallery – and it's an aesthetic adventure I wish everyone could have. Throughout the lockdown period I've often thought of all those Titians and Holbeins in the National Gallery, just hanging there radiating a mysterious potency.

Would I rather we all got the opportunity to say, spend an hour alone in one of the great galleries every two or three years, rather than unlimited access to exhibition spaces with ambience of supermarket checkout lanes? Hell, yes! Better still would be the opportunity to have just one painting from the national collections hanging in your house for a single day. But what about all those jobs! I hear you cry – your friend and his fellow gallery workers, the curators and gift shop salespeople? To which I can only reply: what about all those tunnellers and wooden horse vaulters? They, too, knew weren't going to be in the escape party – but that didn't stop them from digging.

THE NEW EUROPEAN
PODCAST



★ Available Friday morning on iTunes, Audioboom
and Spotify or at www.theneweuropean.co.uk ★